

Governors Island, Infantry Regimental Barracks
(Liggett Hall, Building #400)

HABS No. NY-5715-8

Governors Island
New York Harbor
New York City
New York County
New York

WATER
NY,
in CONG.
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, DC 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GOVERNORS ISLAND, INFANTRY REGIMENTAL BARRACKS HABS No. NY-5715-8
(Liggett Hall, Building #400)

Location: The building faces Clayton Road. It stretches between Wheeler and King Avenues and is bordered by Division Road on the west, Governors Island, New York Harbor, New York, New York County, New York.

Present Owner: United States Coast Guard

Present Occupant: United States Coast Guard

Present Use: Barracks, training center, administration, gymnasium.

Significance: This building was designed by the architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White in 1928. It was part of a unified island beautification plan which included about a dozen new structures following the Georgian Revival style. This structure was the first one built; others were built as funds became available. At the time of its completion, it was the largest building on the island and the first permanent structure built on the landfill portion of the island. This structure was also considered a model barracks complex at the time of its completion because it could house 1,375 men under one roof.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The plans were drawn in 1928 and the building was completed in 1930.
2. Architect: The architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The War Department of the United States (renamed the Department of the Army after 1947) owned the building until 1966 when the island was transferred to the United States Coast Guard.
4. Builder: Construction was contracted out by the Quartermaster Corps.

5. Original plans and construction: Blueprints of elevations, plans and specifications dated 1928 and 1929 are located in Facilities Engineering, Support Center, New York, Governors Island, New York, New York. There is also a good set of photographs taken during the construction of the building by the US Army Signal Corps.

The photographs show that the building was essentially constructed from east to west with the framing for the central block the first to be completed but the last to be enclosed.

The original plans show clearly how the barracks functioned. The building was conceived as being a series of 14 self-contained sections for squads of men. Basic sections (8 of them) consisted of three stories. On the first floor were located the kitchens, mess rooms, storage areas, day rooms and rooms for commanding officers and sergeants. The second and third floors were squad rooms (sleeping rooms), rooms for non-commissioned officers and toilets. These main sections were linked together by 2 corner and 2 end pavilions which were three-and-a-half stories tall; the attic was used for storage space. The four-story central block in the middle of the structure consisted of two basic sections plus a drill hall on the fourth floor. These sections were linked together at the rear of the building on the first floor by a brick arcade and on the second and third floors by an external two-story porch that served as a corridor.

Pictures of the interiors taken at the time the building was completed show that the interiors were stark and functional. The interior walls were plastered over but the structural concrete beams were clearly visible.

The original cost of the structure was listed in the Army Real Property Records as being \$1,362,800.41.

6. Additions and alterations: The structure was used as barracks until the Coast Guard took it over in 1966. Most of the interior renovations were done to make the building more habitable according to a rising standard of living.

Early renovations in 1945 included new wiring and plumbing in sections 4, 5, 6 and 7 (now called D, E, F, and G) located on the north end of the central block and including the three sections north of it.

The drill hall in the central block was converted to a gymnasium before 1954, when the gym floor was replaced.

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In 1952, the porches along the south facade of sections 4 and 5 (now sections D and E) were enclosed. This was the start of a trend of porch and arcade enclosings.

In 1959, the structure was redesigned to house 807 men in peacetime instead of the 1,375 men for whom it was originally designed.

When the Coast Guard took over the building in 1966, they redesigned the lower floors to house classrooms of the various schools.

In 1967-68, a new dormitory wing, section O, was added to section J. The names Roberts and Schaefer Co., Inc. Architects and Engineers, and Carlson and Sweatt, Mechanics and Electrical Engineers appear on the plans.

Also at this time, a new wing was added to the rear of the central block off section G. (Army Real Property Records)

In 1974, sections M and N (two sections in the east wing) were redesigned to house the Vessel Traffic Center. This affected the building's outward appearance by bricking in the arcade along the first story and filling in the exterior two-story porches. It also replaced the older doors with modern metal and glass doors and bricked in some of the window openings.

The Coast Guard is responsible for many of the interior design changes that make the barracks more acceptable housing by today's standards.

B. Historical context:

Building #400 was designed to house the 16th Infantry stationed on Governors Island as part of the Second Corps Area which, during the 1920s and 1930s, was headquartered on the island. The Second Corps Area originally included New York, New Jersey, Delaware and Puerto Rico.

The building was part of a beautification plan for the island that replaced the deteriorating wood-framed structures which had been used for housing since World War I. The overall plan consisted of this large U-shaped barracks, two U-shaped apartment houses for officers, three new apartment houses for non-commissioned officers, a new hostess house, hospital, nurses home, laundry, firehouse, garages, shops and storehouses. The entire plan was estimated to cost \$8,000,000 and was to be built as funds became available.

Building #400 was the first structure built. Money was appropriated in 1928 through the Deficiency Act which made \$1,086,000 available to construct this model barracks plus an additional \$30,000 to pay architects fees.

The new barracks was considered a departure from traditional army barracks which housed each company, troop or battery in a separate building. In this structure, an entire regiment was housed under one roof. Yet at the same time, the structure maintained the separate identity of the various squads since it was built in separate structural sections. These sections were then linked together along the interior of the quadrangle by an external arcade and a two-story external porch, a design element commonly used in traditional barracks.

Building #400 was the first permanent structure built on the landfill that had been completed in 1912. Because of the insecurity of the new land, the foundations rest on piles set deep into the harbor bed.

At the same time as this building was being planned, Fiorello LaGuardia introduced legislation into the House of Representatives to make Governors Island into a municipal airport for the city of New York. The island's location and size seemed ideal at the time. The army agreed to allow feasibility studies for an airport to be made but kept constructing new buildings. LaGuardia still hoped to use the island as an airport when he became mayor in 1934, but the army was well entrenched and the site for the airport was selected in Queens.

Building #400, which had been known as Building #100 in an earlier numbering system, was named Liggett Hall in 1957 in honor of Lieutenant General Hunter Liggett, First Army Commander from February 1918 to April 1919.

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This structure was the first of several to be built according to a beautification plan for Governors Island that emphasized the Georgian Revival style. It is a massive building that serves as a barrier to separate the historic part of the island from the modern construction.

2. Condition of fabric: The condition of the building is excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The original structure is a large U-shaped building, 1023' across the front x 66' with two large wings 255' x 49'6" forming three sides of a quadrangle. In the center is a four-story, 15-bay central block flanked on either side by three, three-story sections. At the corners and the ends of the wings are 5-bay, three-and-a-half story sections. Each section has a shallow projecting pediment (3 bays) along the outer facade and a deeper projecting pedimented gable into the quadrangle.
2. Foundations: The foundation is of reinforced concrete.
3. Walls: The walls are built of brick bonded to structural clay tile at every sixth row (common bond, 1 header row to five stretcher rows). Between the first and second story and at the roof line are concrete string courses which define the structural framing.
4. Structural systems, framing: The structure is composed of poured reinforced concrete pillars, 2'4" wide, supporting poured reinforced concrete beams. Over this is a poured concrete floor. The roof is supported by wood king post trusses except in the central block where the roof supports are steel frame and the roof itself is poured gypsum (from original specifications).
5. Porches: Along the rear of the structure is a brick arcade on the first floor (now mostly enclosed) and a two-story porch supported on concrete pillars. These porches serve as corridors linking the separate building sections.

The main entrance to each section of the building is found on the outer facade facing Clayton Road and Wheeler and King Avenues. A typical entrance is composed of a square flat-roofed porch supported on two round stone columns and two stone pilasters surmounted by an iron balustrade.

6. Chimneys: There are two double brick chimneys with stone capping on either end of the central block of the structure.

7. Openings: There is a monumental three-story, arched, projecting, pedimented, vaulted passageway outlined in brick and stone quoins and a scrolled stone keystone located in the central block. The pediment is decorated with a heavy stone string course, round stone knobs, applied stone festoons, and an incised date stone "MCMXXIX" (1929) surmounted by stone relief of the Seal of the United States. There is a stone cornice in the gable. Both sides have the same treatment.

- a. Doorways and doors: The outer doorways are mostly doubled wood and glass paneled doors with five-light transoms or modern metal, or metal and glass doors.
- b. Windows: The windows are mainly six-over-six light double-hung sash. The original wooden frames have been replaced with aluminum ones. Those windows located along the outer facades have segmental arch frames. Those located in the arcade and in the stories above are rectangular. There are smaller windows located in the fourth story of the central block which appear to be three fixed lights over six lights. There are side lights in the central block which are small one-over-one light double hung sash. At ends of the central block are two circular windows with stone keystones located on either side of a large arched window with stone keystone and impost.

In each projecting gable end there is a semicircular wood framed window. In each corner and end pavilion are circular windows outlined in brick with four stone keystones.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The roof is a slate gable roof with projecting pediments to the front facade and cross gables to the rear. The projecting pediments along the front facade stuccoed. Over the center of the central block is a large octagonal wood cupola on a square wood base decorated with four round knobs. The segmented metal dome of the cupola is supported on round wood columns. Between the columns, each of the eight sides of the cupola has an arched opening filled with louvers. Above the dome is a weather vane.

Over the corner and end pavilions are slate hipped roofs. Over these roofs are smaller open octagonal wood cupolas that stand on an octagonal base and support a bell-shaped roof on square wood columns.

- b. Cornice, eaves: Metal flashing is at the eave line above the concrete string course. The gable ends have boxed wood cornices.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: The front door of each structural unit opens into a stairhall. This stair joins all three floors of the unit. Along the hall are located groups of rooms. The hall leads to the exterior arcade at the rear which has been bricked in and allows for more comfort and ease in moving through the building sections. Along the arcade, the original walls that served as doorways into the rear projecting pavilions have been widened, leaving either isolated offices or classrooms in what was once the individual kitchen areas of each building section.

The floors within each section are reachable via interior stairways. On the second and third floors, these stairways open up into a short internal corridor that links the berthing rooms, bathrooms and lounge areas. From the lounge areas there are doors to the external corridor which links the individual building sections.

- 2. Stairways: Each section of the building has an interior concrete stairway with a metal railing.
- 3. Flooring: The original floor is concrete. Over this has been laid carpet or linoleum. The bathrooms are tiled.
- 4. Wall and Ceiling finish: The original wall finishing was plaster over structural tile. In many cases, this remains visible, but some walls are now covered in plywood paneling. Room partitions have been added that are of gypsum board. In the bathrooms is ceramic tiling.

Acoustical drop tiling has been installed on many ceilings throughout the building.

5. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: There are some original door openings visible throughout the building. These are wood paneled doors with nine-lights and a three-light transom. These doors have a wood frame. Many of the doors have been replaced with modern metal doors.
- b. Windows: In 1985, the original wood-framed windows are being replaced with aluminum framed windows.

6. Decorative features and trim: None of note.

7. Hardware: The hardware is modern.

8. Mechanical equipment: The original building was heated by a boiler system located in the basement of the central block. The heat was transmitted through metal radiators. Cooling is done by individual window units.

9. Original furnishings: None.

D. Site

- 1. General setting and orientation: This structure is situated just beyond the original boundary of Governors Island on the landfill that was finished in 1912. It provides a barrier between the historic part of the island and the modern part. It faces the brick officers quarters to the north and faces onto an open space along the south.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Maps and architectural drawings:

The following blueprints dated 1928 are available from Facilities Engineering, New York Support Center, Governors Island, New York, New York:

General plans:

- General plans for third floor, drill hall and roof
- First floor plans for units 4,5,6,9,10,11
- Second and third floor plans for units 4,5,6,9,10,11
- First floor plans for units 7 and 8
- Second floor plans for units 7 and 8
- Third floor plans for units 7 and 8
- Basement plans, units 7 and 8
- Drill Hall plan over units 7 and 8

Details

Concrete details

First Floor plans, units 7 and 8

General plans, third floor, drill hall and roof

Basement, First floor, Second and third floor plans, 1928.

Detail of cupolas over units 1,3,12 and 14

The following blueprints dated 1928 are available from the McKim, Mead and White collection, New York Historical Society, New York, New York:

Tube 442

General plans

Basement, first and second floors

Third floor, drill hall and roof plans

General elevations

First floor plan for units 1,2,3,12,13,14

Second and third floor plans for units 1,2,3,12,13,14

First floor plans for units 4,5,6,9,10,11

Second and third floor plans for units 4,5,6,9,10,11

Basement plans for units 7 and 8

First floor plans for units 7 and 8

Second floor plans for units 7 and 8

Third floor plans for units 7 and 8

Drill hall plan over units 7 and 8

Elevations and sections (2 prints)

Details and sections

Stair details

Details

Foundation plan for units 1,2,3,12,13,14

First floor plan for units 1,2,3,12,13,14

Second and third floor plans for units 1,2,3,12,13,14,

Attic plans for units 1,2,3,12,13,14,

Roof plans for units 1,2,3,12,13,14,

Foundation plan for units 4,5,6,9,10,11

First floor plans for units 4,5,6, 9,10,11

Second and third floor plans for units 4,5,6,9,10,11

Attic plan for units 4,5,6,9,10,11

Roof plan for units 4,5,6,9,10,11

Foundation plan for units 7 and 8

First floor plan for units 7 and 8

Second and third floor plan for units 7 and 8

Drill hall plans over units 7 and 8

Roof plan over units 7 and 8

Roof trusses (3 prints)

Column schedule

Concrete details (2 prints)

Detail of cupola over drill hall and units 7 and 8

Detail of pediment and cupola on pavilions 1,3,12 and 14

Detail of central motif in units 7 and 8

Tube 441

Plot plan locating infantry barracks and drill hall
Water and sewer system for infantry regimental barracks

B. Views

Construction photographs taken by the US Army Signal Corps, 1928-1930. These are located in the Facilities Engineering, New York Support Center, Governors Island, New York, New York. Copies of these photographs are part of the documentation pages.

Albums/Prints Completion Photographs of Military Housing Projects 1927-36, National Archives, Still Pictures Branch, Record Group 77-CC.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Army Real Property Records, set used by Facilities Engineering, New York Support Center, Governors Island, New York, New York.

Specifications for construction, 1929. This is located in the Facilities Engineering, New York Support Center, Governors Island, New York, New York.

New York Times, January 29, 1928.

New York Times, November 16, 1930, Section V, p. 19.

New York Times, January 15, 1928, Section IX, p.4, col.5.

New York Times, April 15, 1934, vi, p.6.

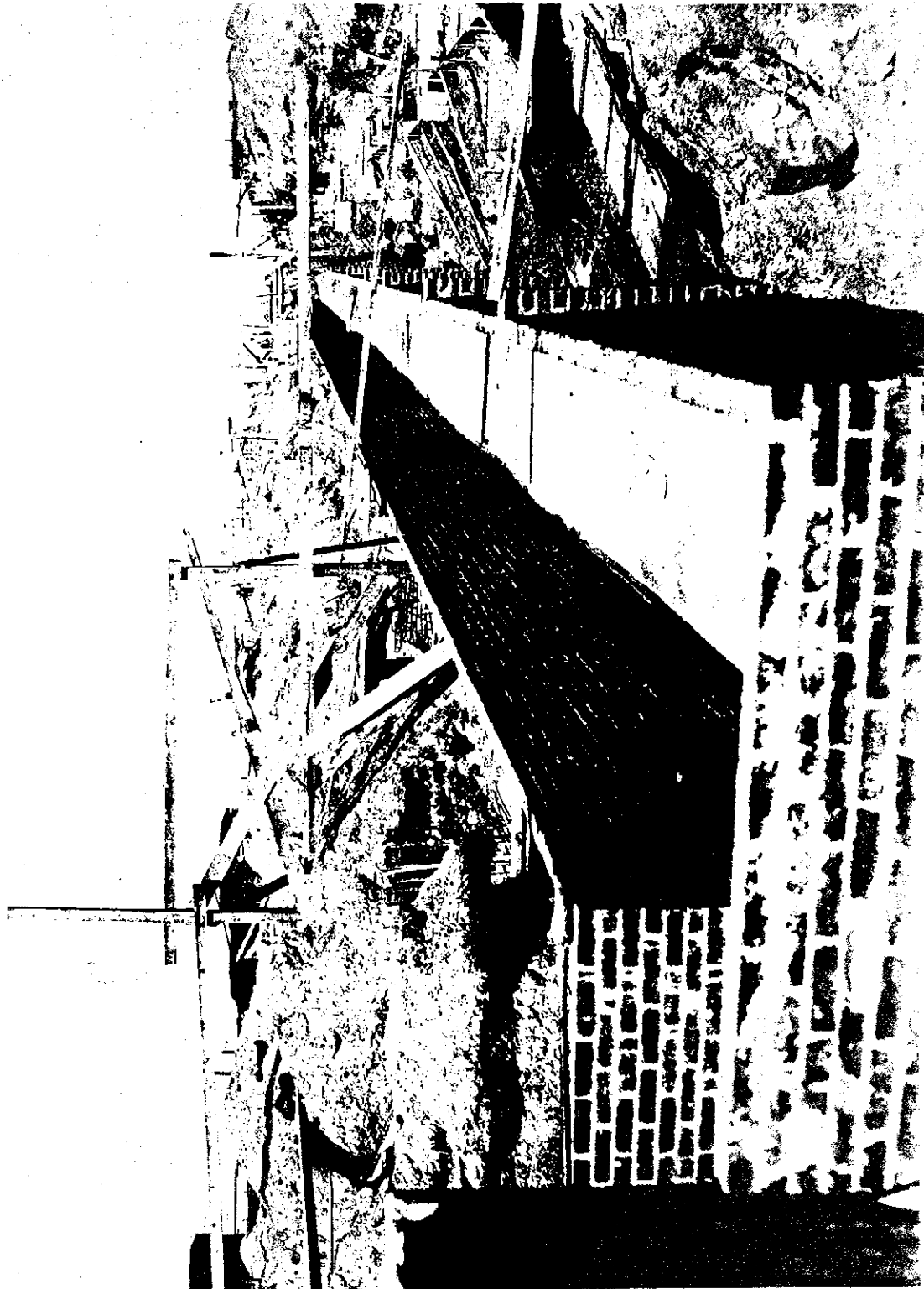
2. Secondary and published sources:

Boggs, Major Kenneth L. The Sentinel Isle: A Brief History of Governors Island Fort Jay, 1637-1950, Governors Island, New York.

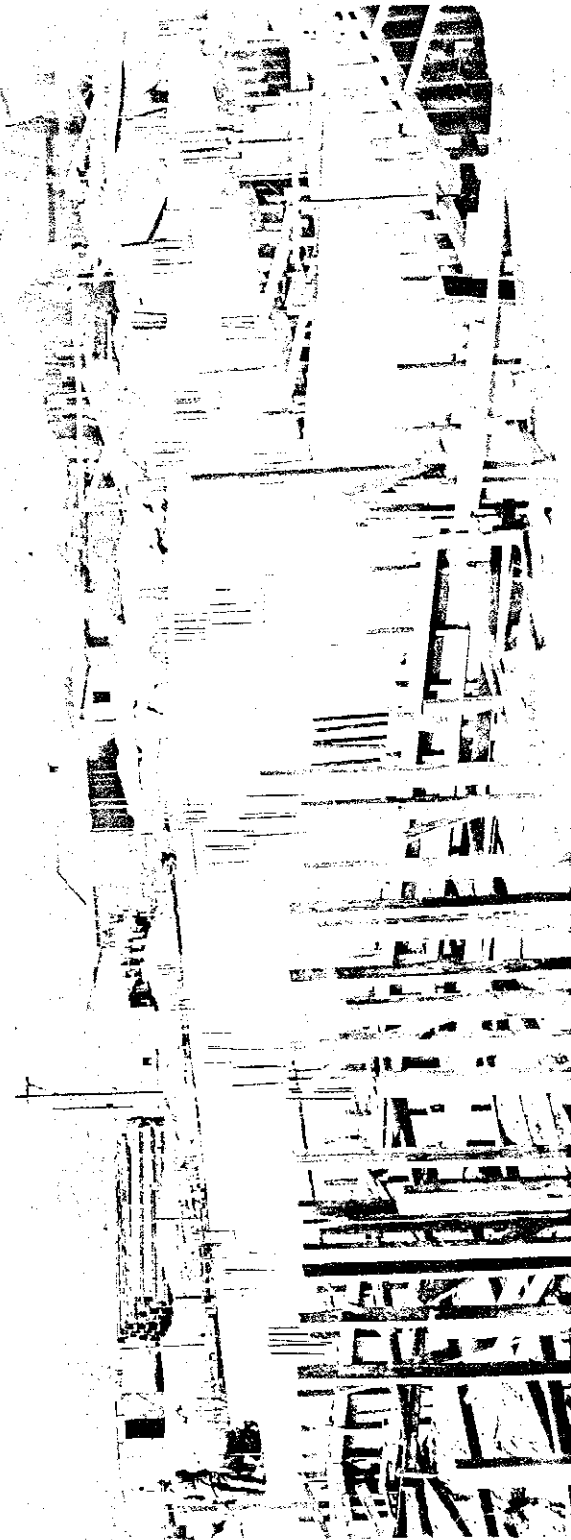
Ray, Max A. The History of the First United States Army from 1918 to 1980. Fort Meade, Md.: First United States Army, Field Printing Plant, 1980.

U.S. Army. The Story of Governors Island, New York, New York, 1957.

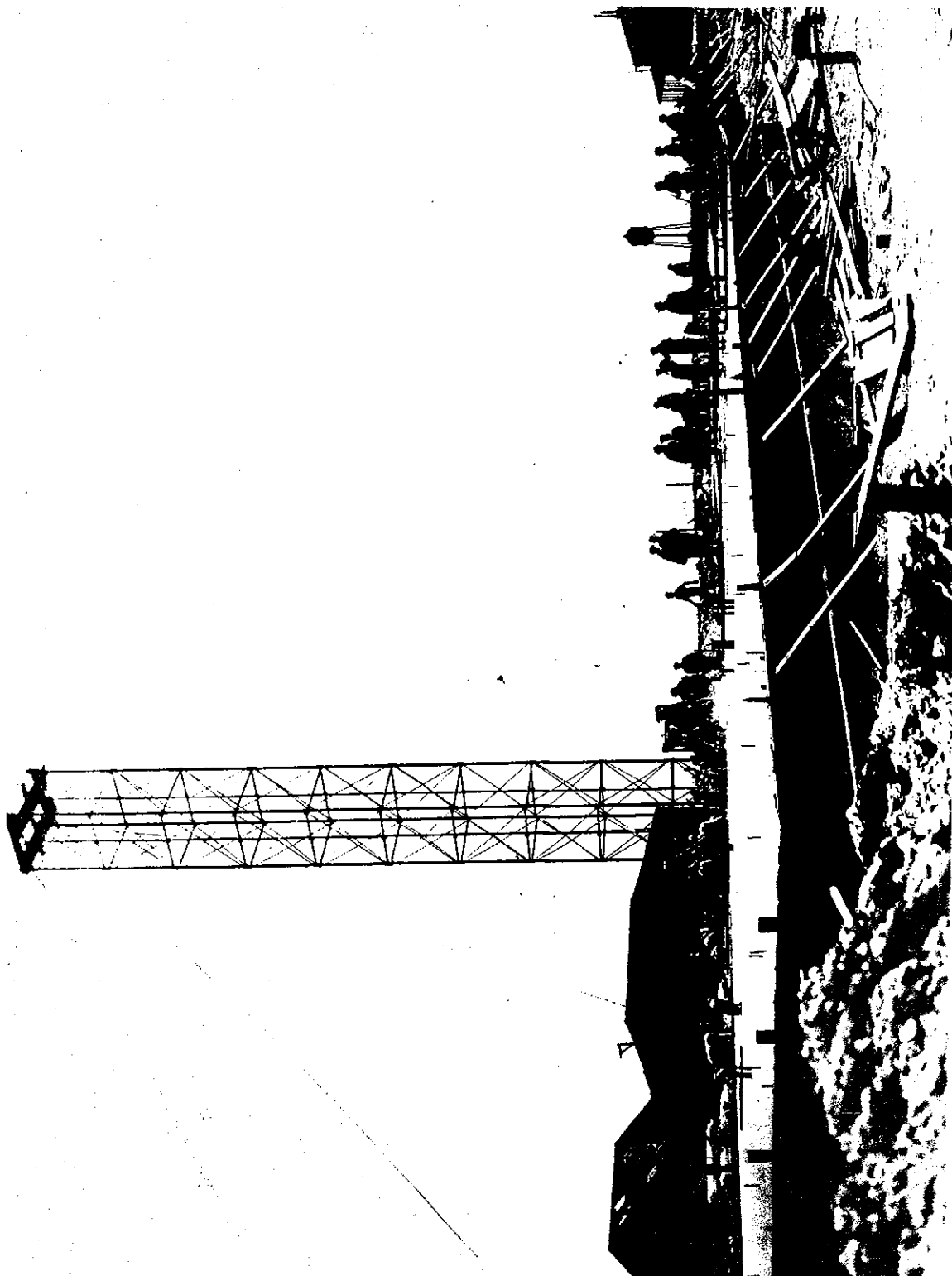
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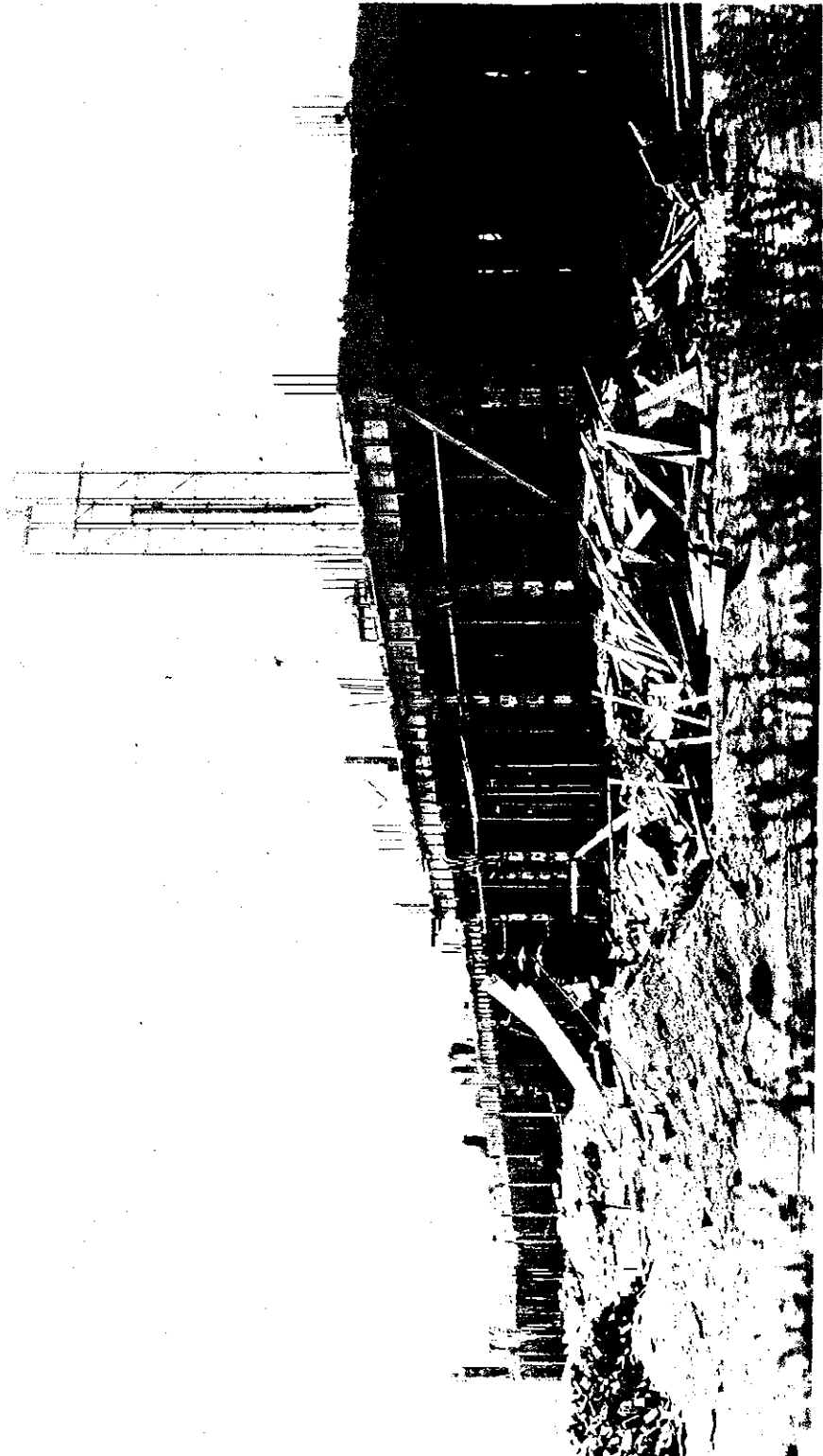
Pipe tunnel excavation, brick walls and concrete floor in
units 1,2, and 3 (west wing). March 20, 1929.



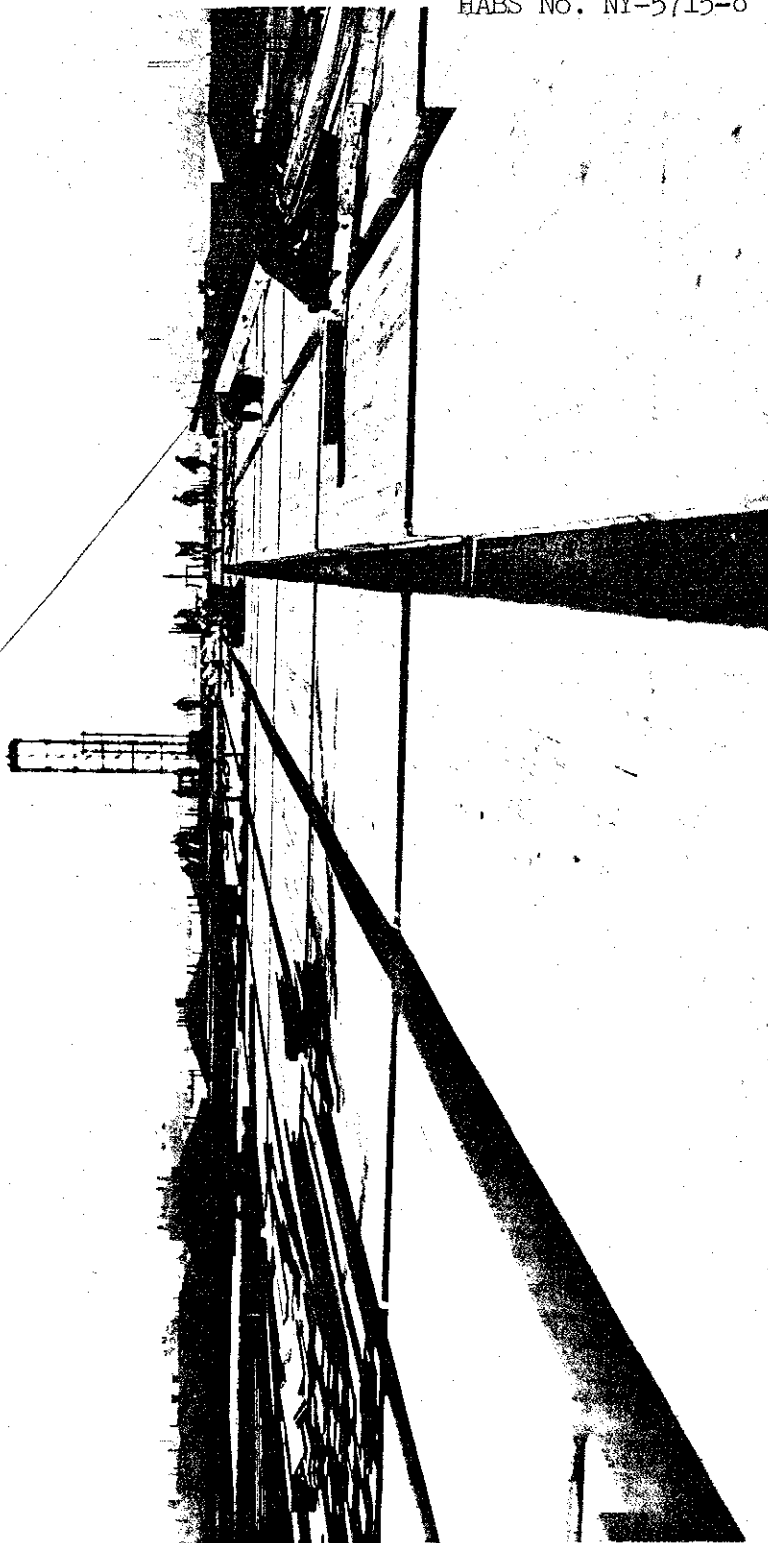
First floor concrete in place in unit 7
(in central block). March 20, 1929.



Pouring and finishing concrete on first floor of
units 1,2 and 3 (west wing). April 27, 1929.



First to second floor forms in place in units 3 to 7
(west of central block). April 27, 1929.



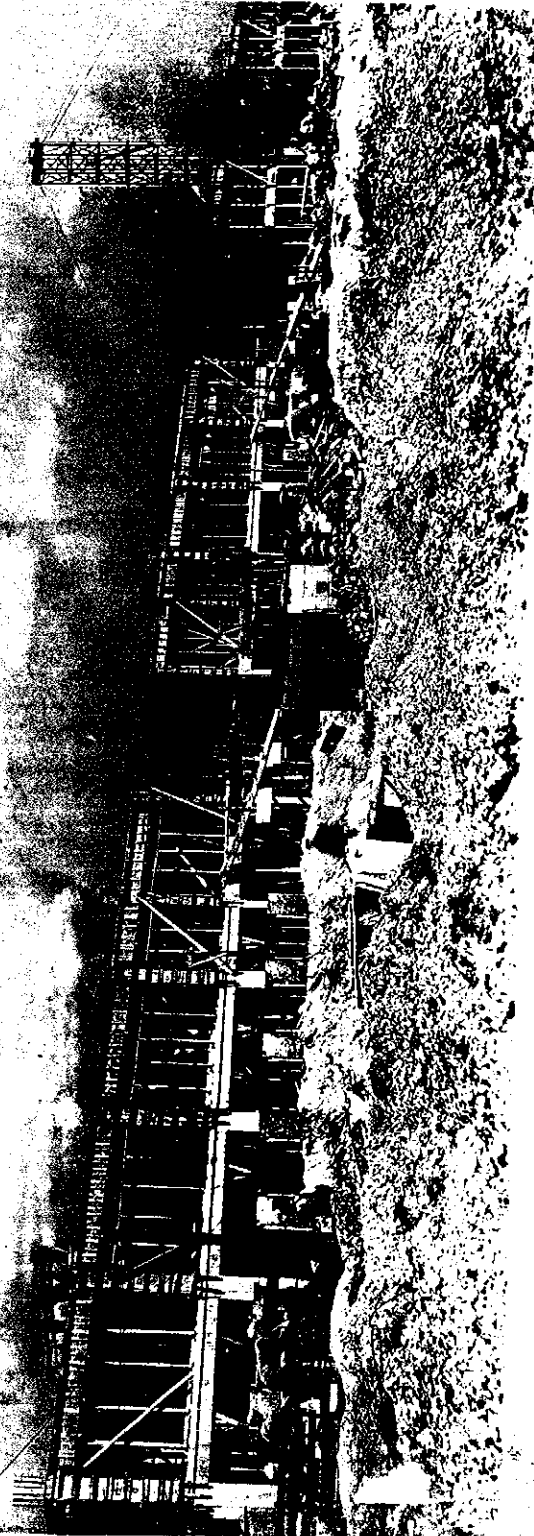
Second floor forms in place in units 3 to 6
(west side of central block). April 27, 1929.

D.6.

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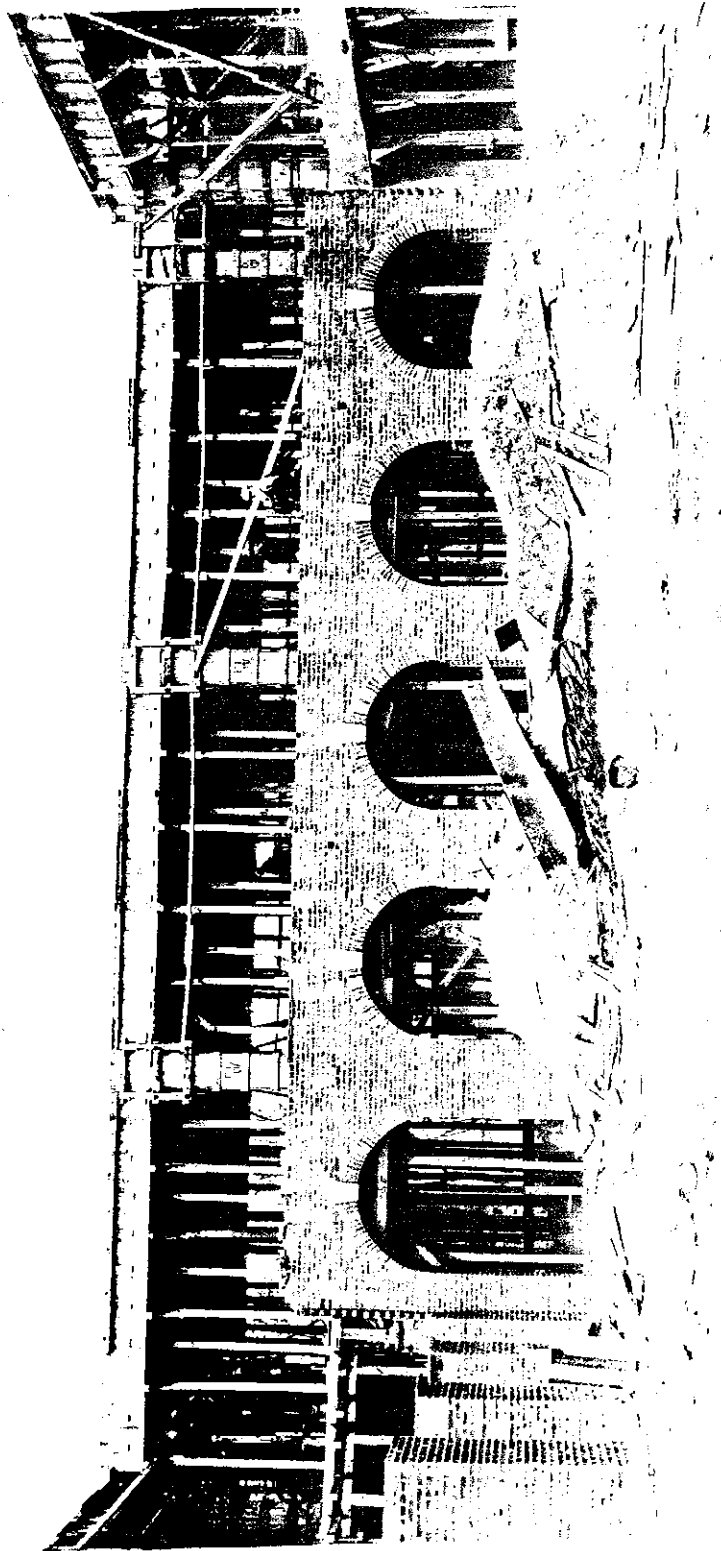
View looking east, units 7 to 12. April 27, 1929.



Rear view of units 7,8,9 and 10 (east of central block).
April 27, 1929.

D.8.

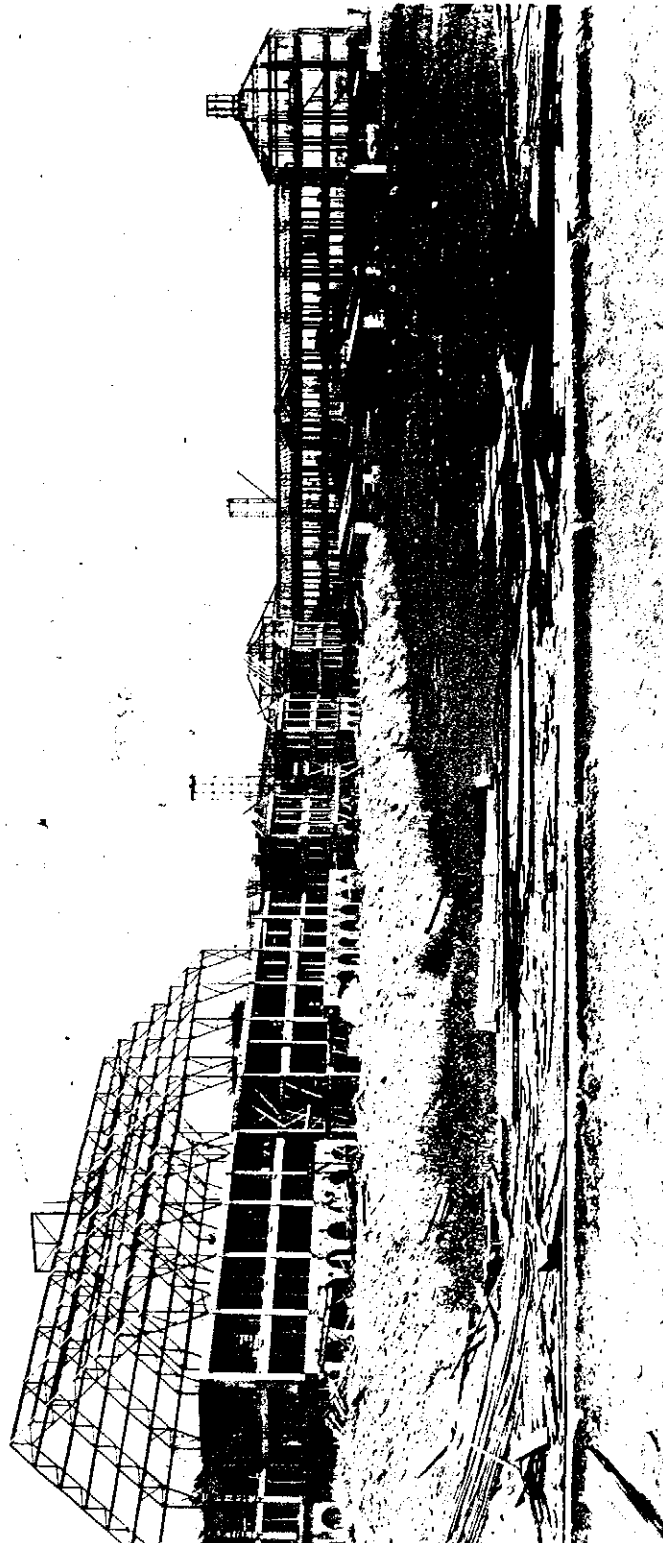
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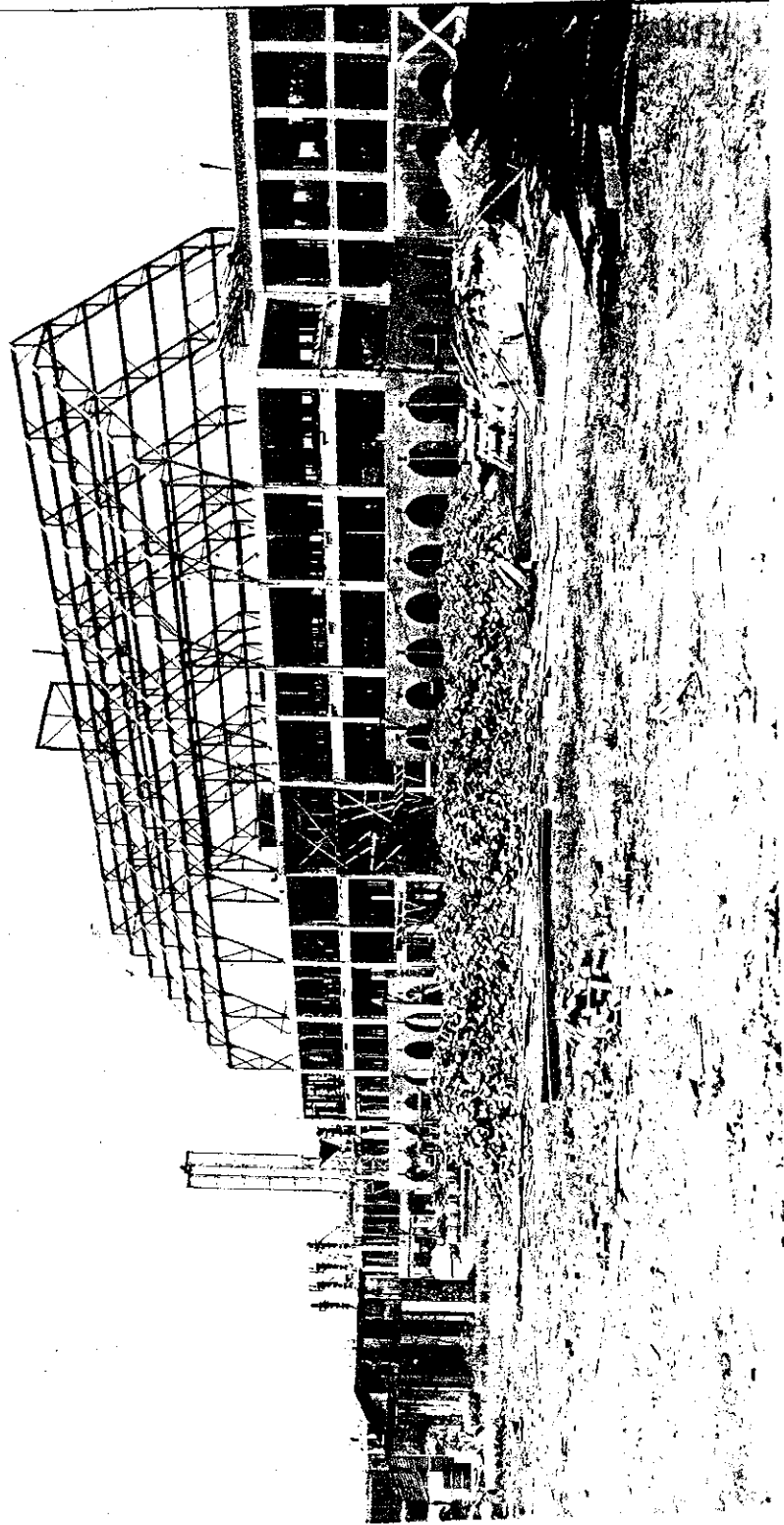
Rear view of units 8 and 9 (east of central block).
April 27, 1929.



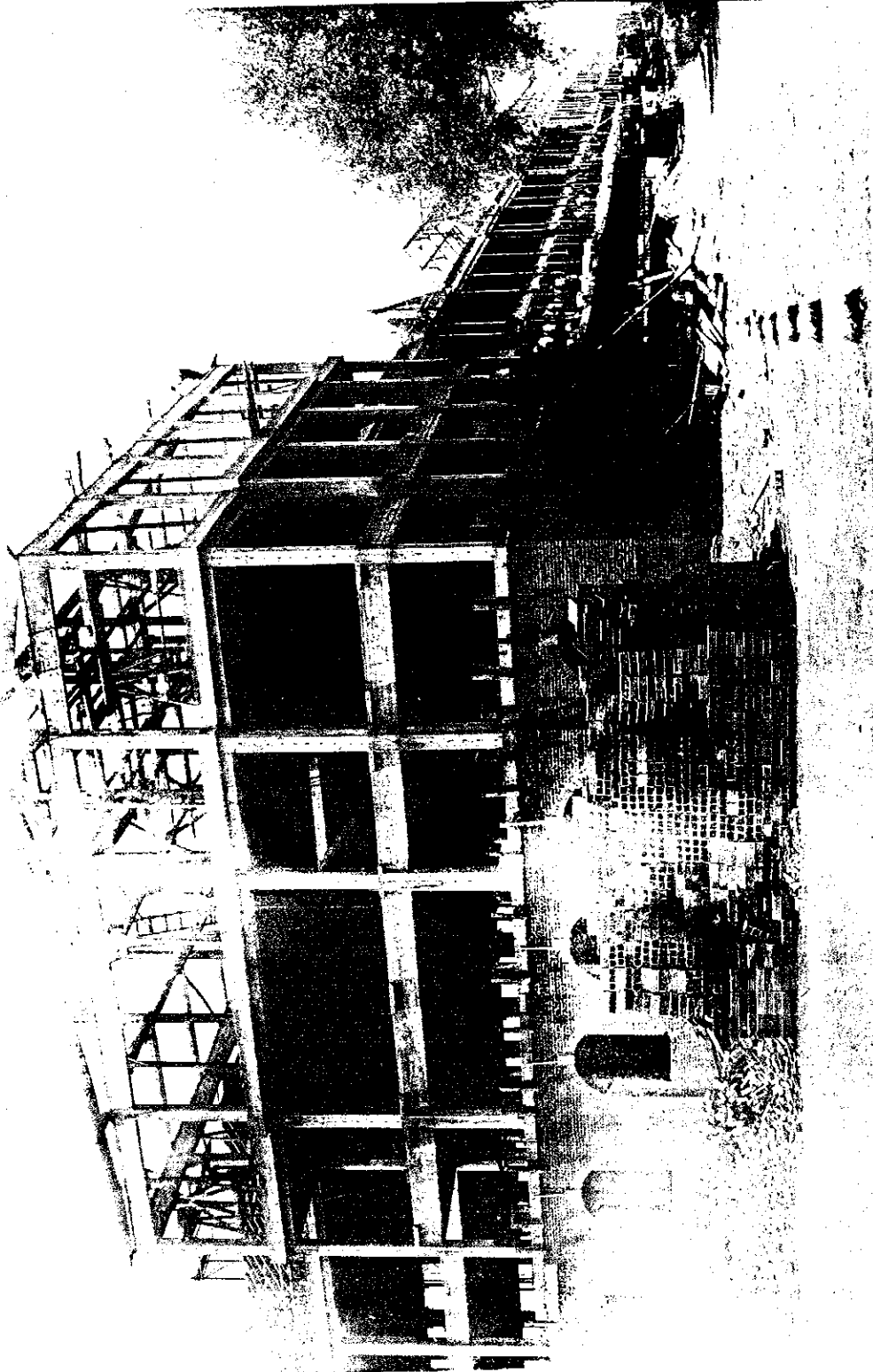
Rear view looking west from unit 14 (east wing).
June 18, 1929.



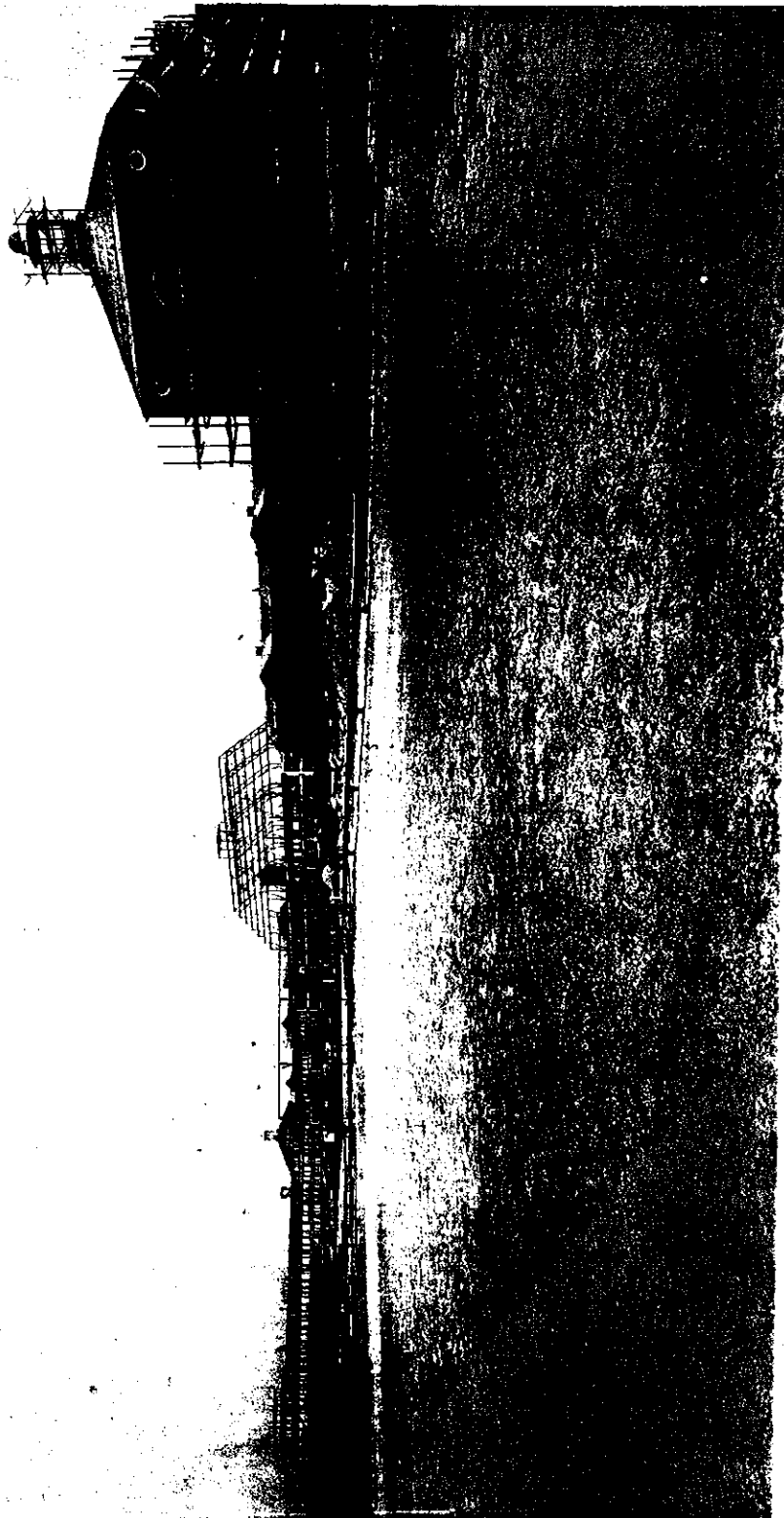
Rear view looking east - units 7 to 14. June 18, 1929.



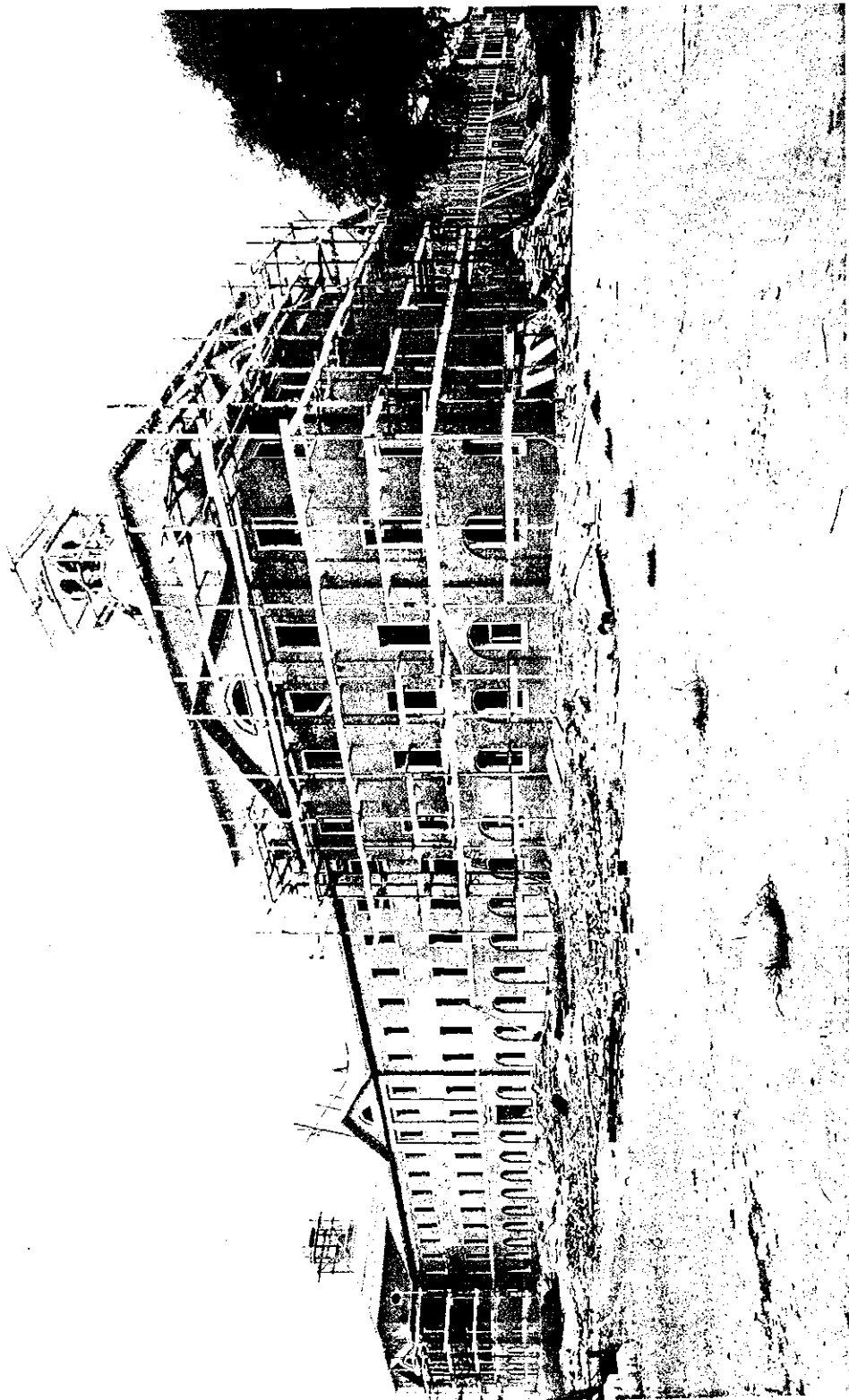
Rear view of units 7 and 8 (central block).
June 18, 1929.



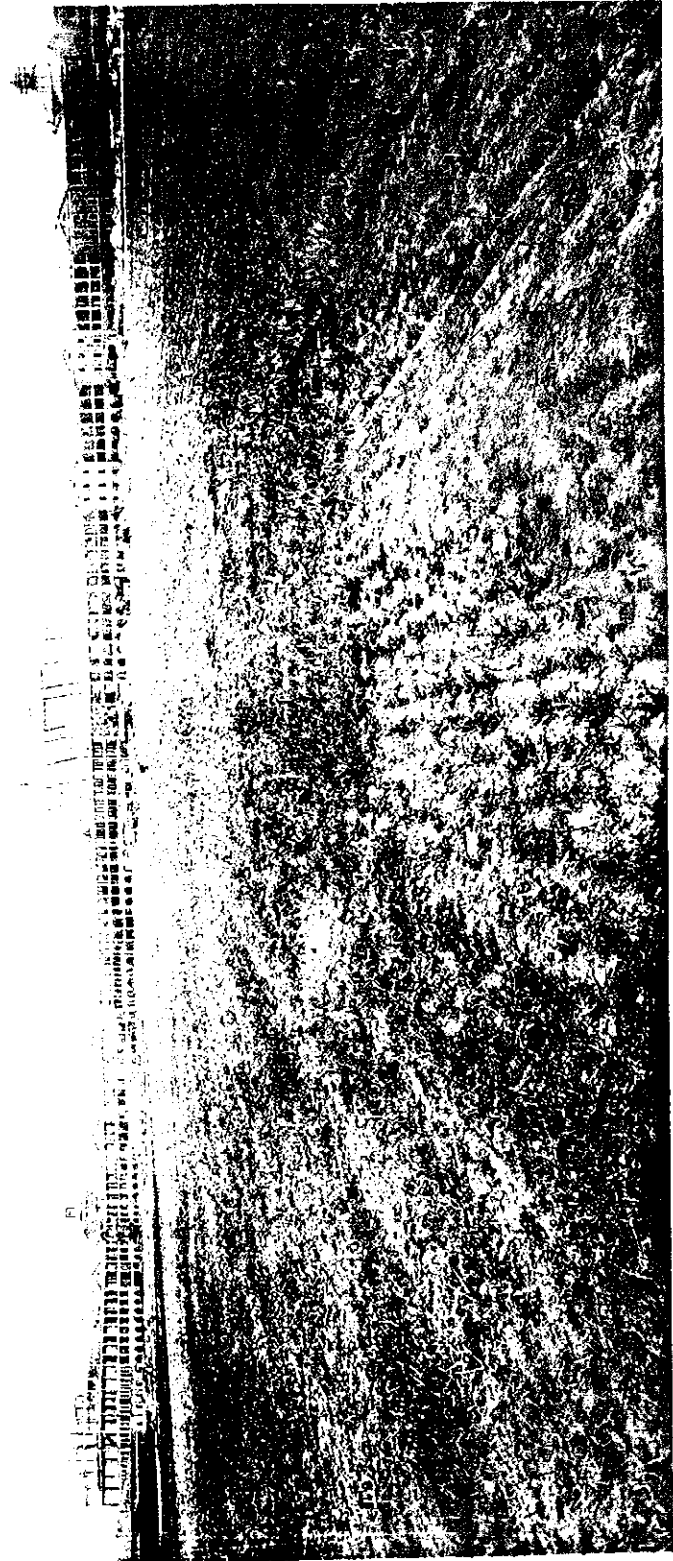
View from unit 12 on front face of building (looking west).
June 18, 1929.



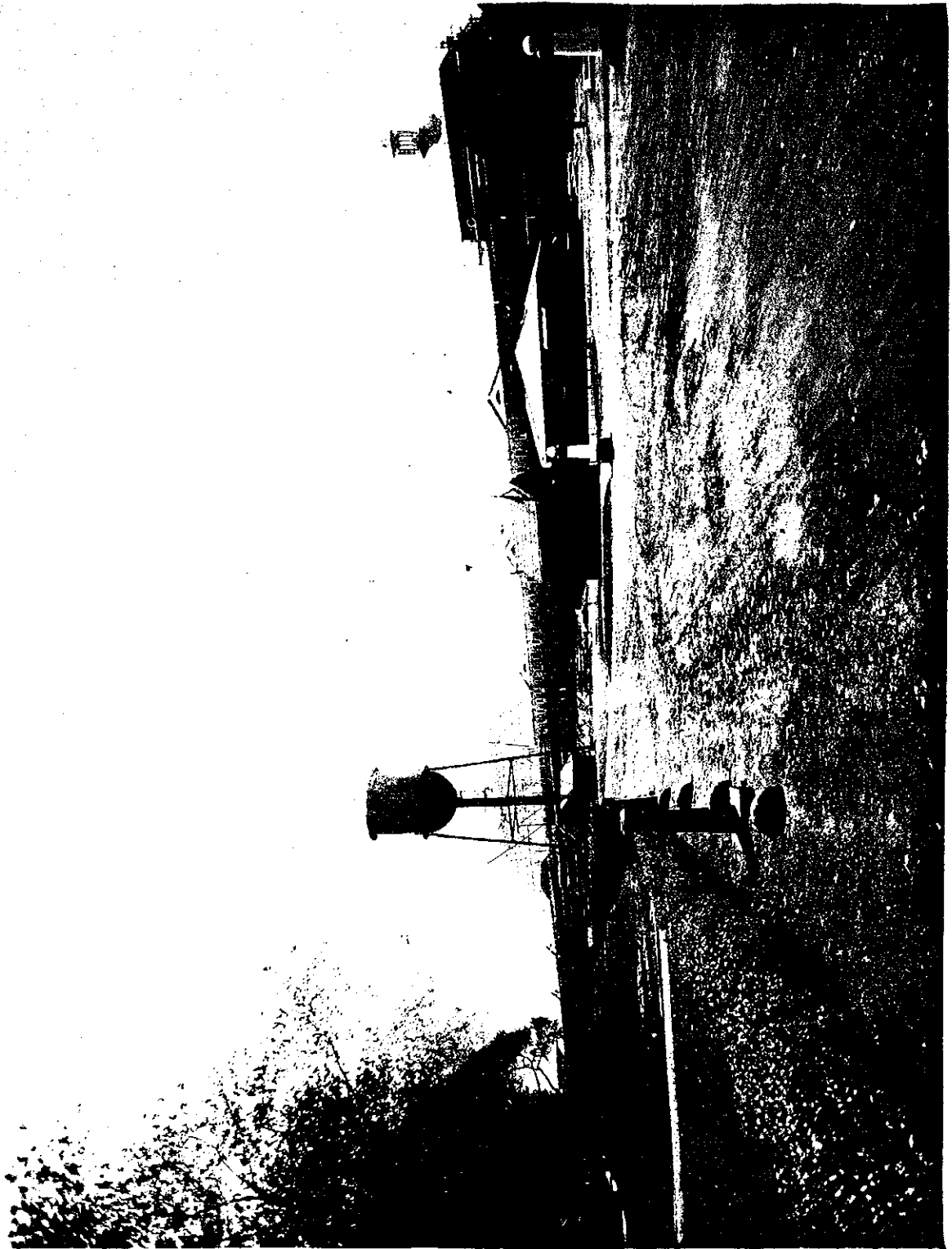
View from rear of unit 14 looking north. August 6, 1929.



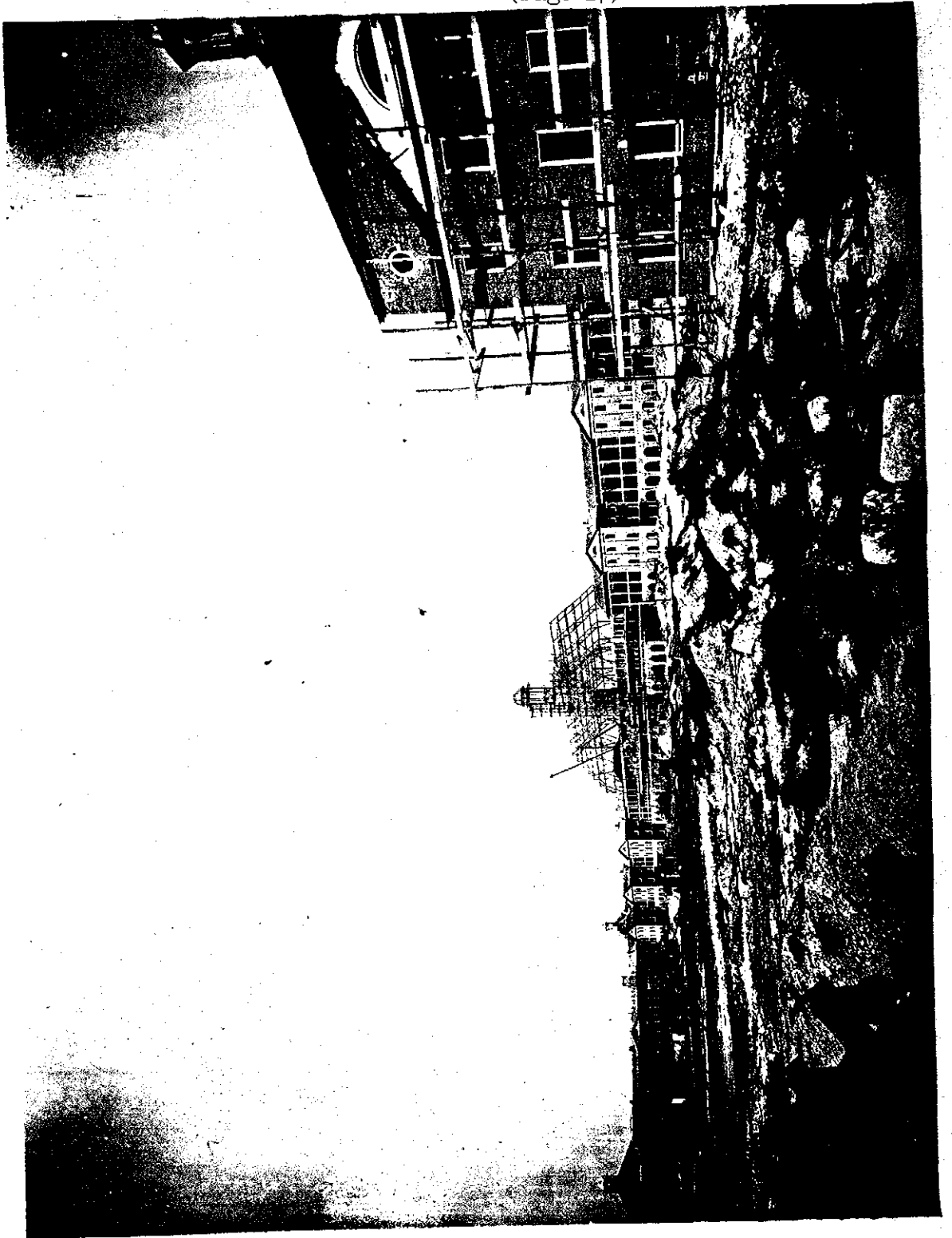
View near unit 12 looking west. August 6, 1929.



Rear view from polo field. August 6, 1929.



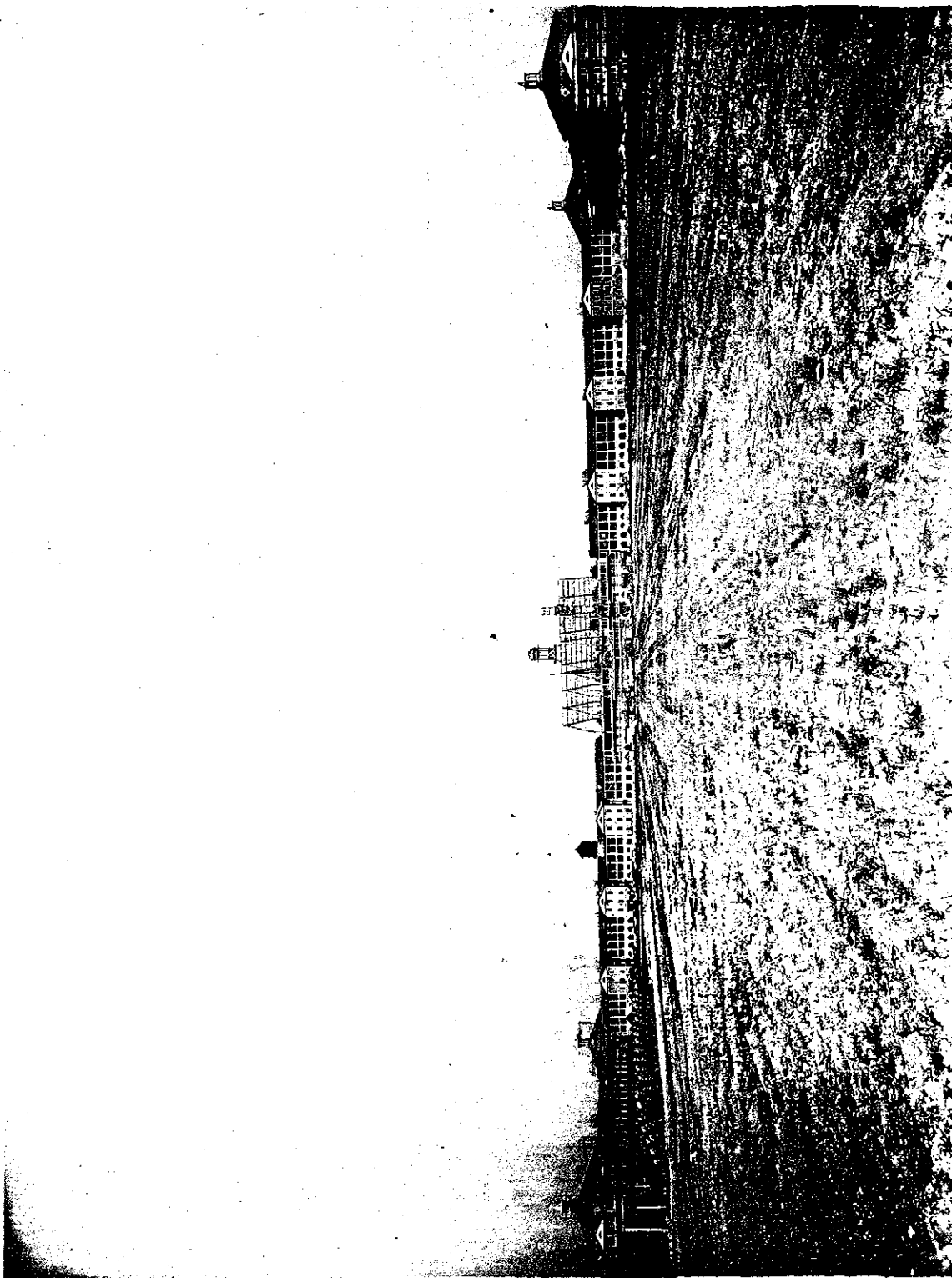
Front of building looking southeast. September 23, 1929.
(Note demarkation between original island and landfill).



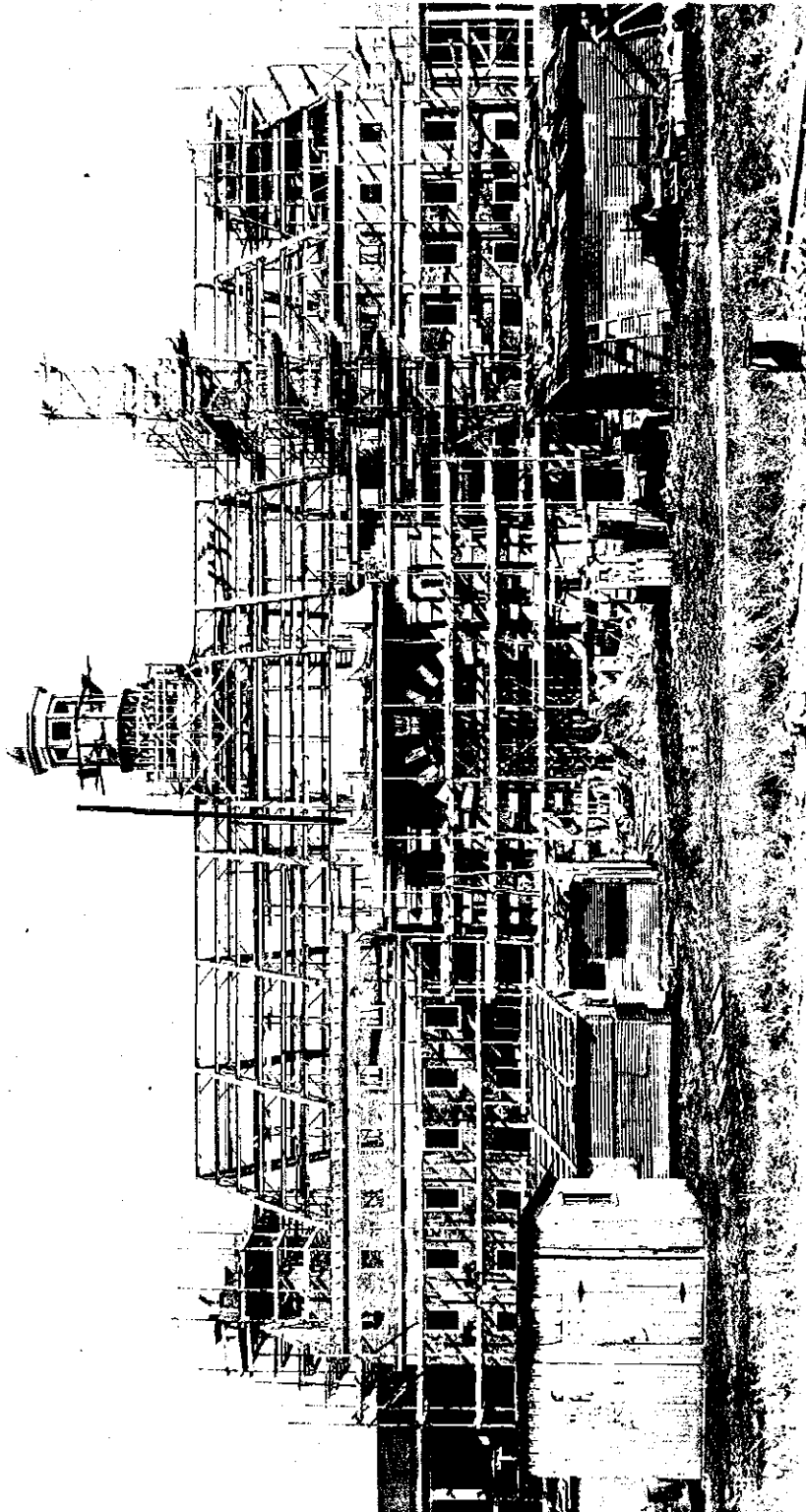
View from rear of unit 14 looking north-west. September 23, 1929.

D.18.

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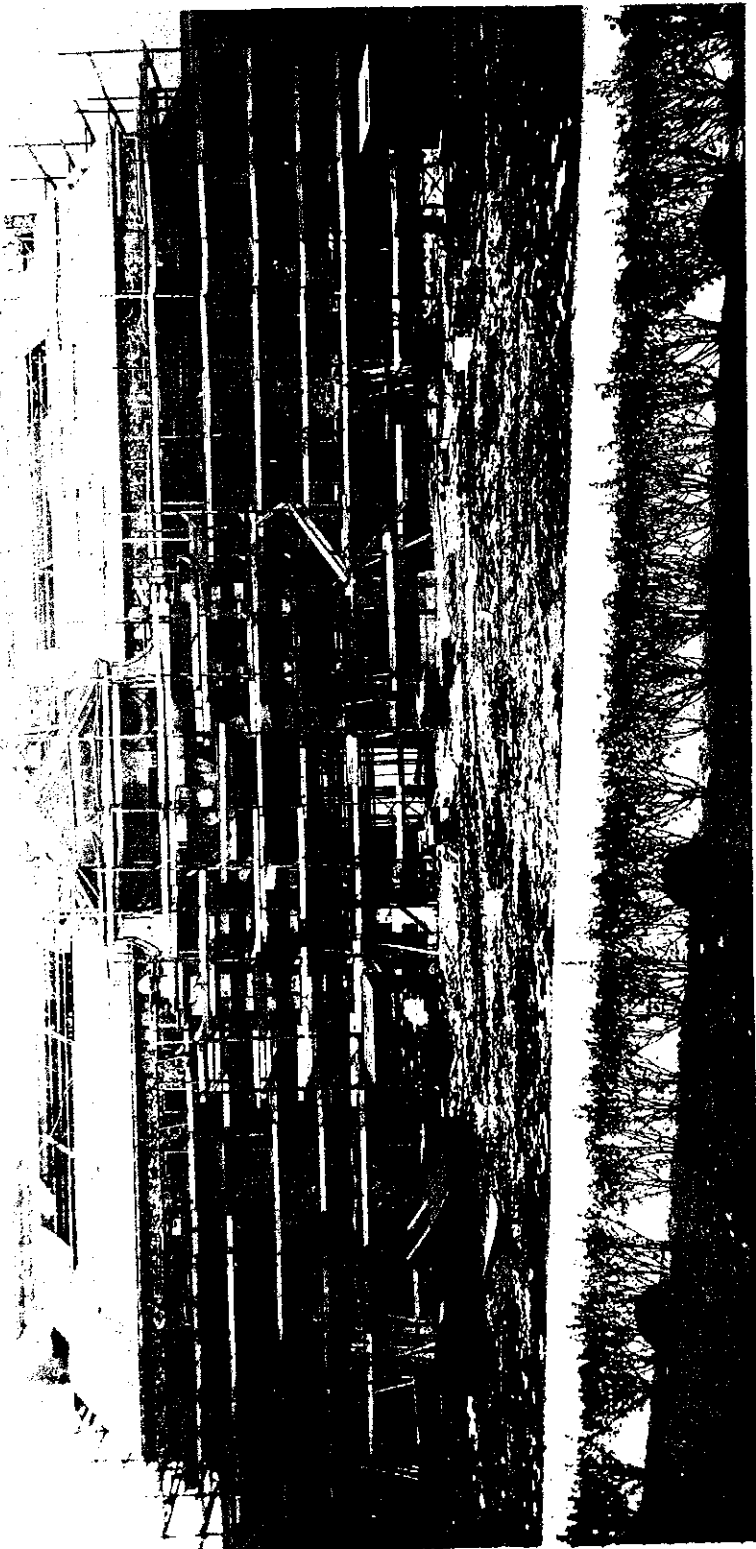
View looking north from polo field. September 23, 1929.



Rear view of units 7 and 8 (central block). November 1, 1929.



Front view looking south. December 12, 1929.



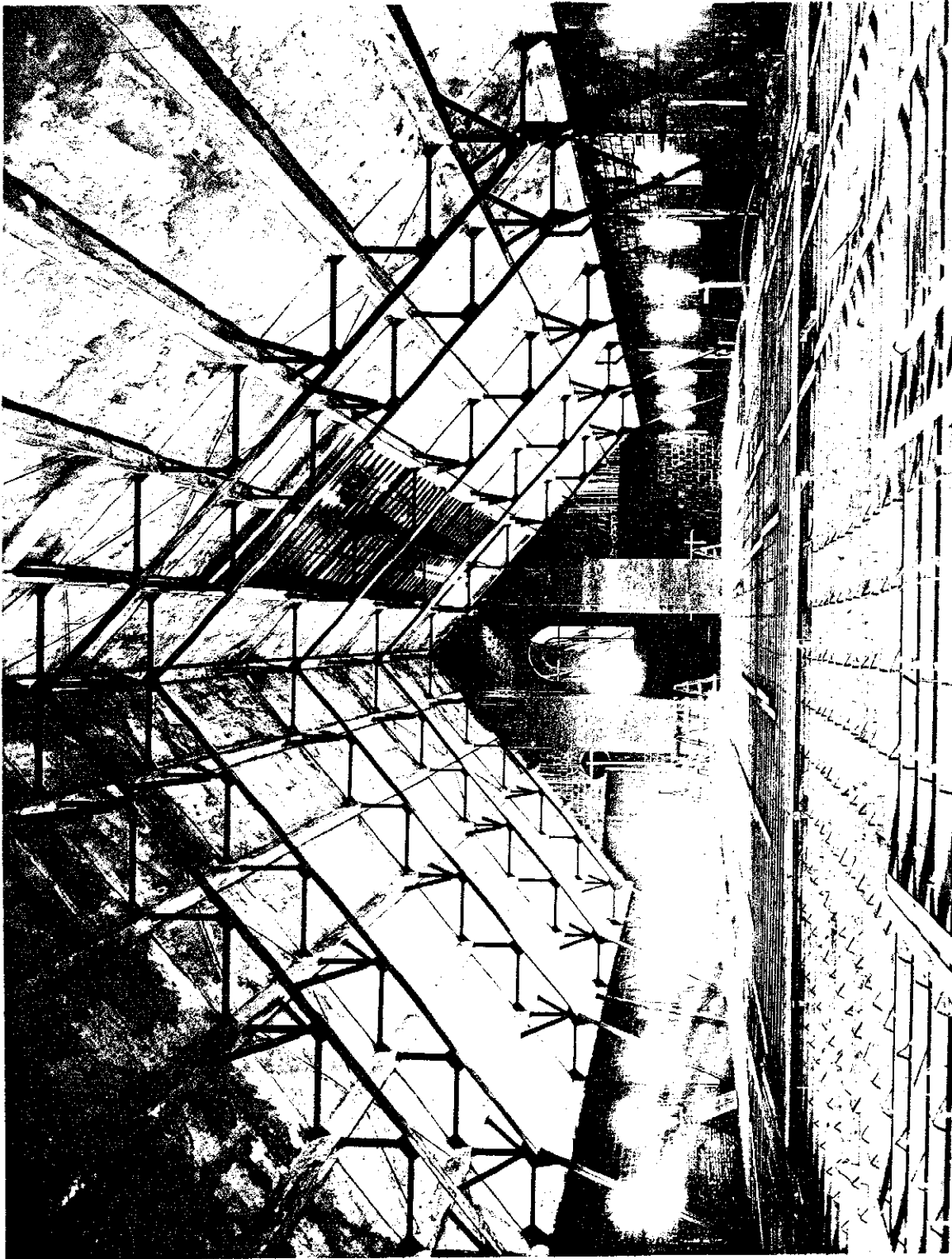
Front view of units 7 and 8. Central arch and stonework completed.
December 12, 1929.



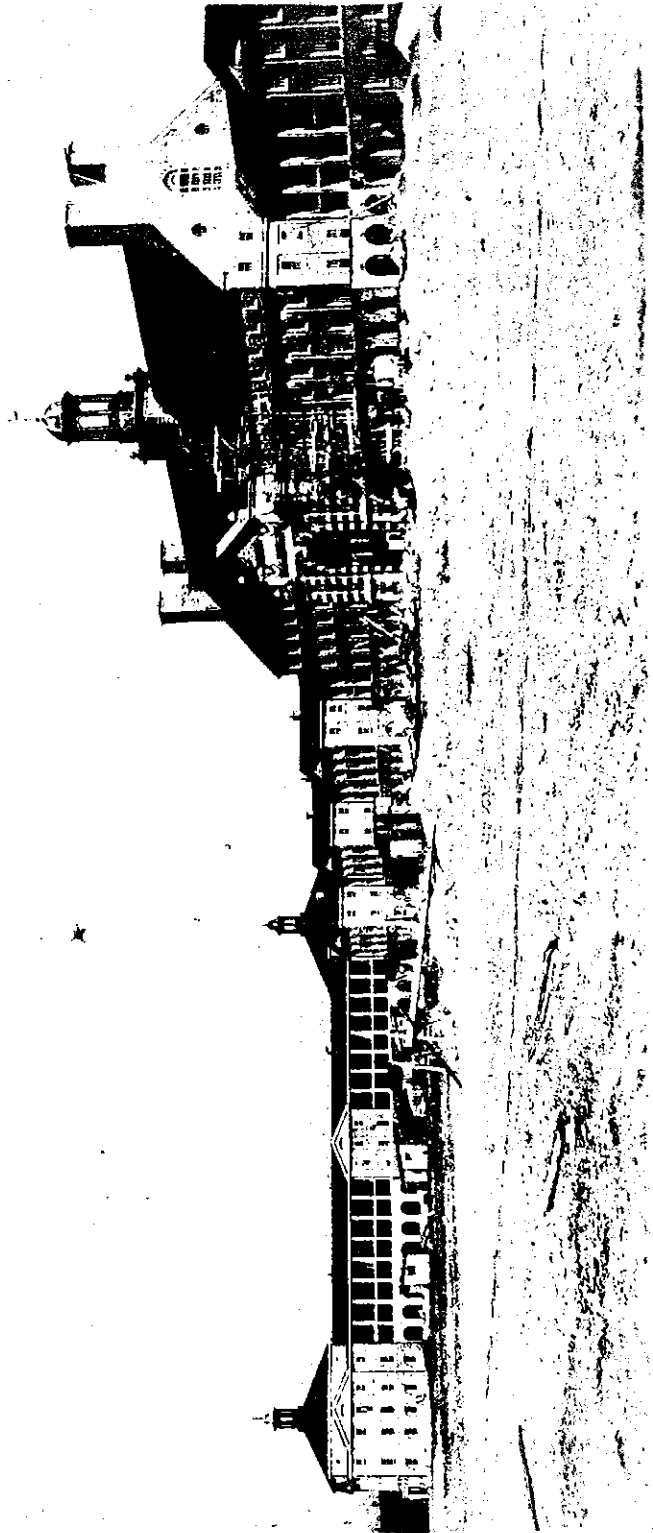
Columns and stonework. Front entrance porches to all units except 7 and 8.
December 12, 1929.



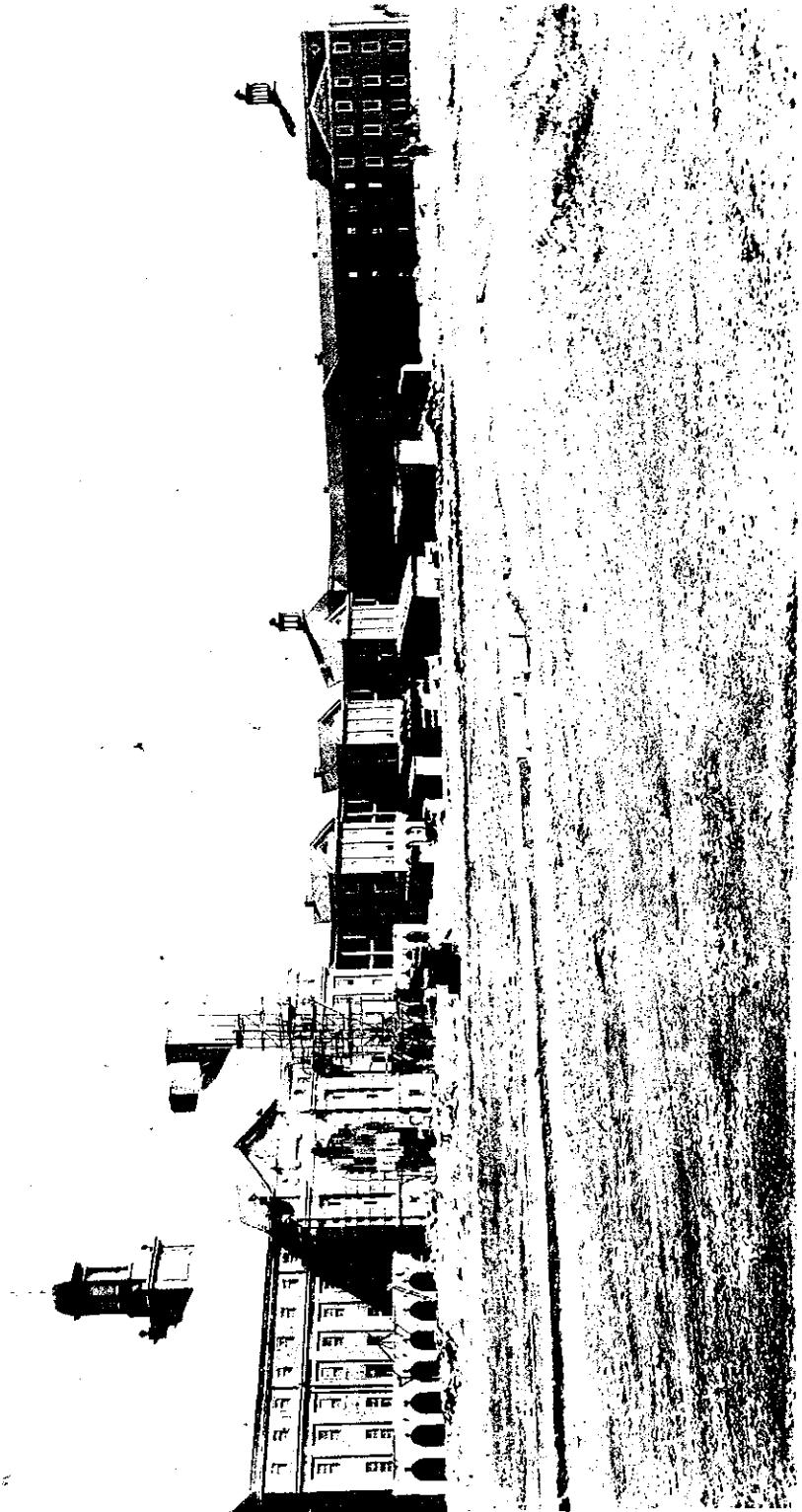
View looking north-west from unit 14. January 23, 1930.



Drill hall. Wood sleepers in place for floor. January 23, 1930.



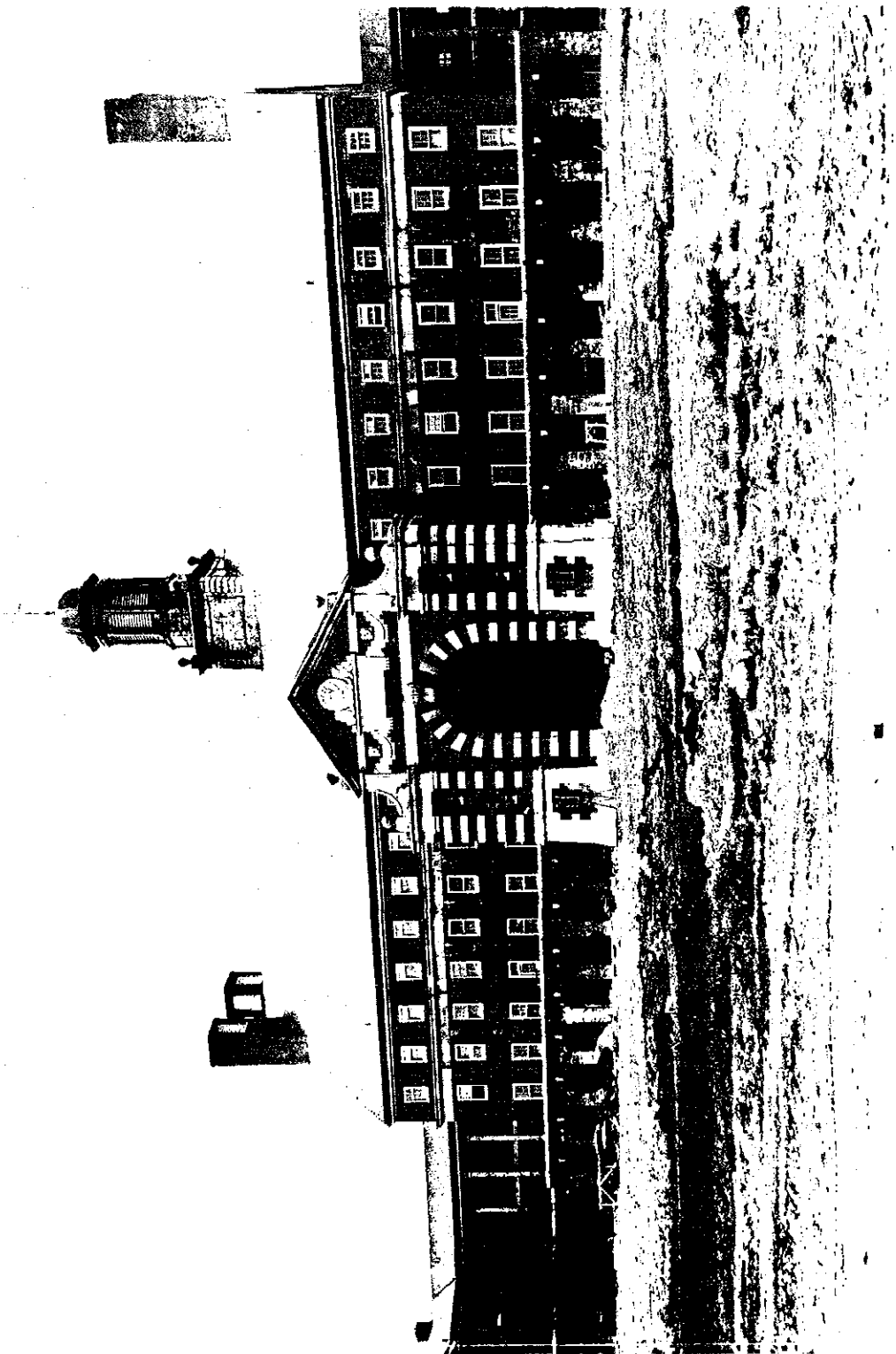
View looking north-west from unit 14. March 19, 1930.



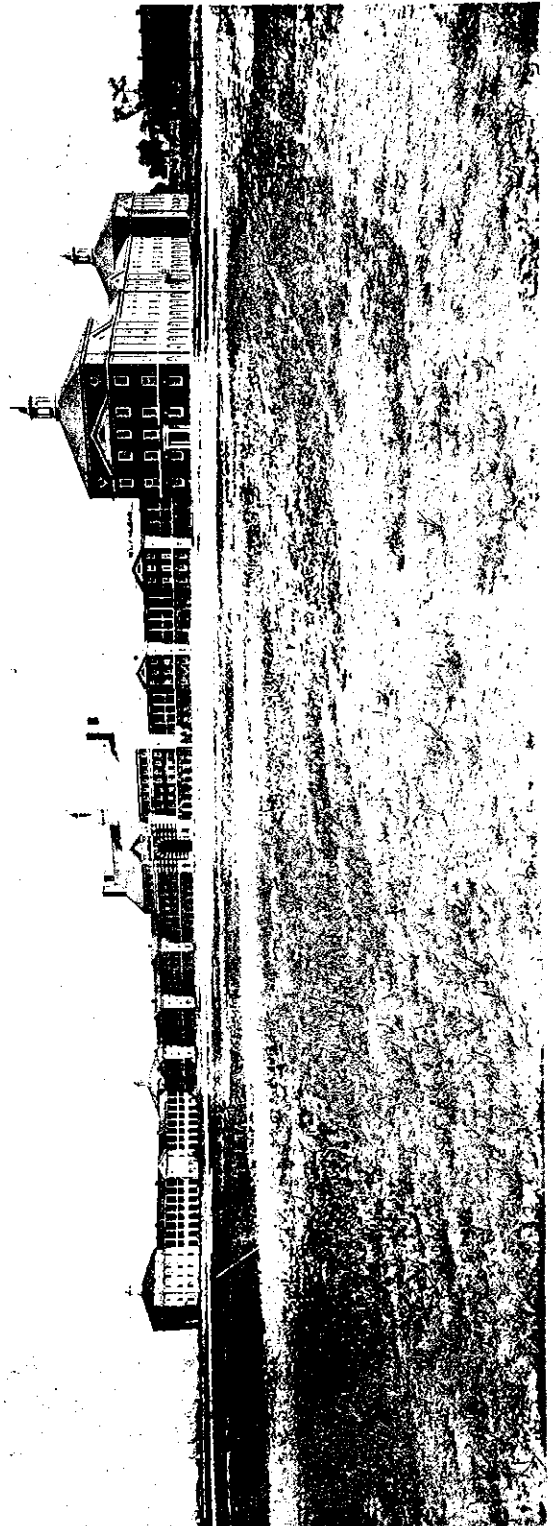
Rear view - units 7 to 14 looking north-east. March 19, 1930.



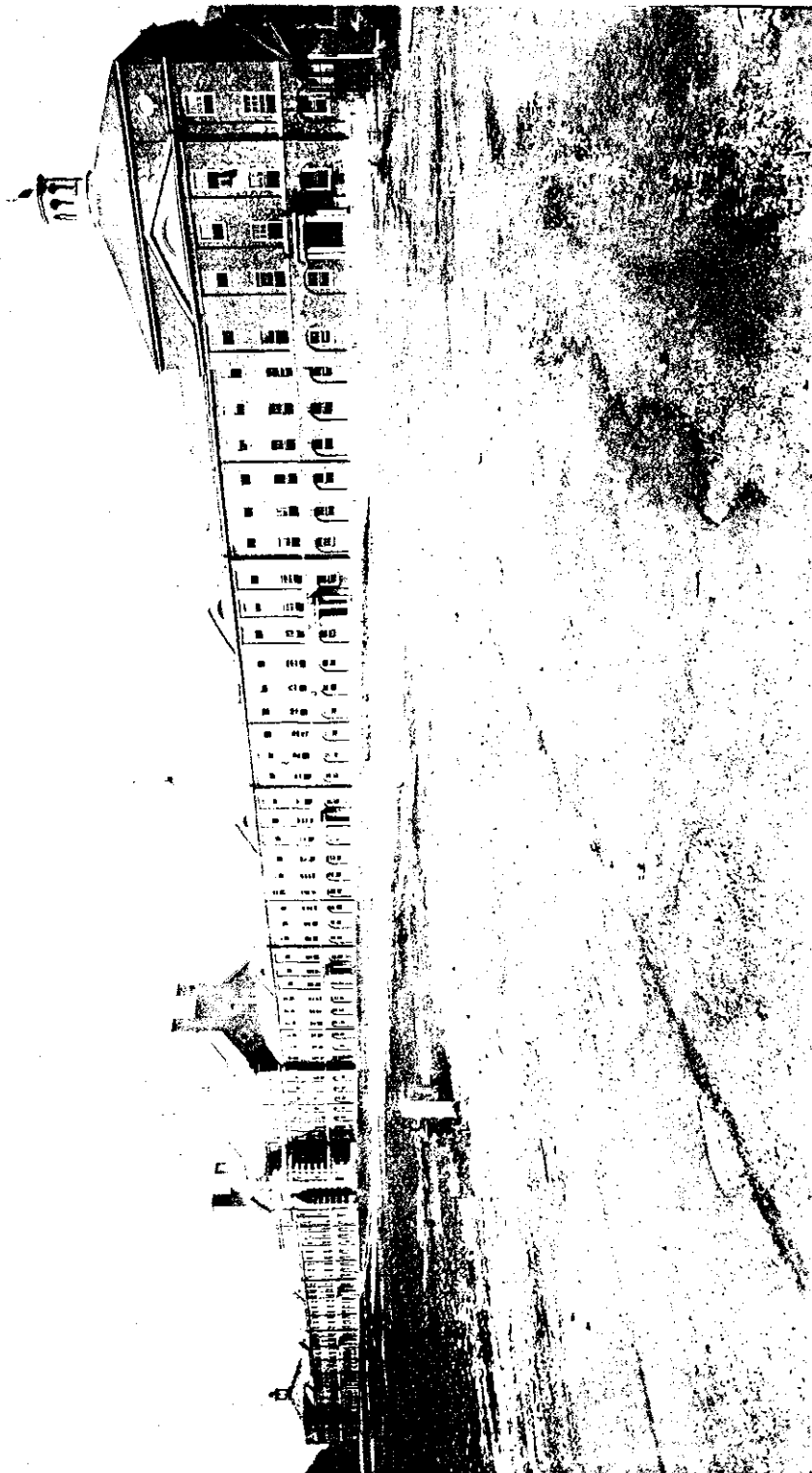
Interior view of drill hall. March 19, 1930.



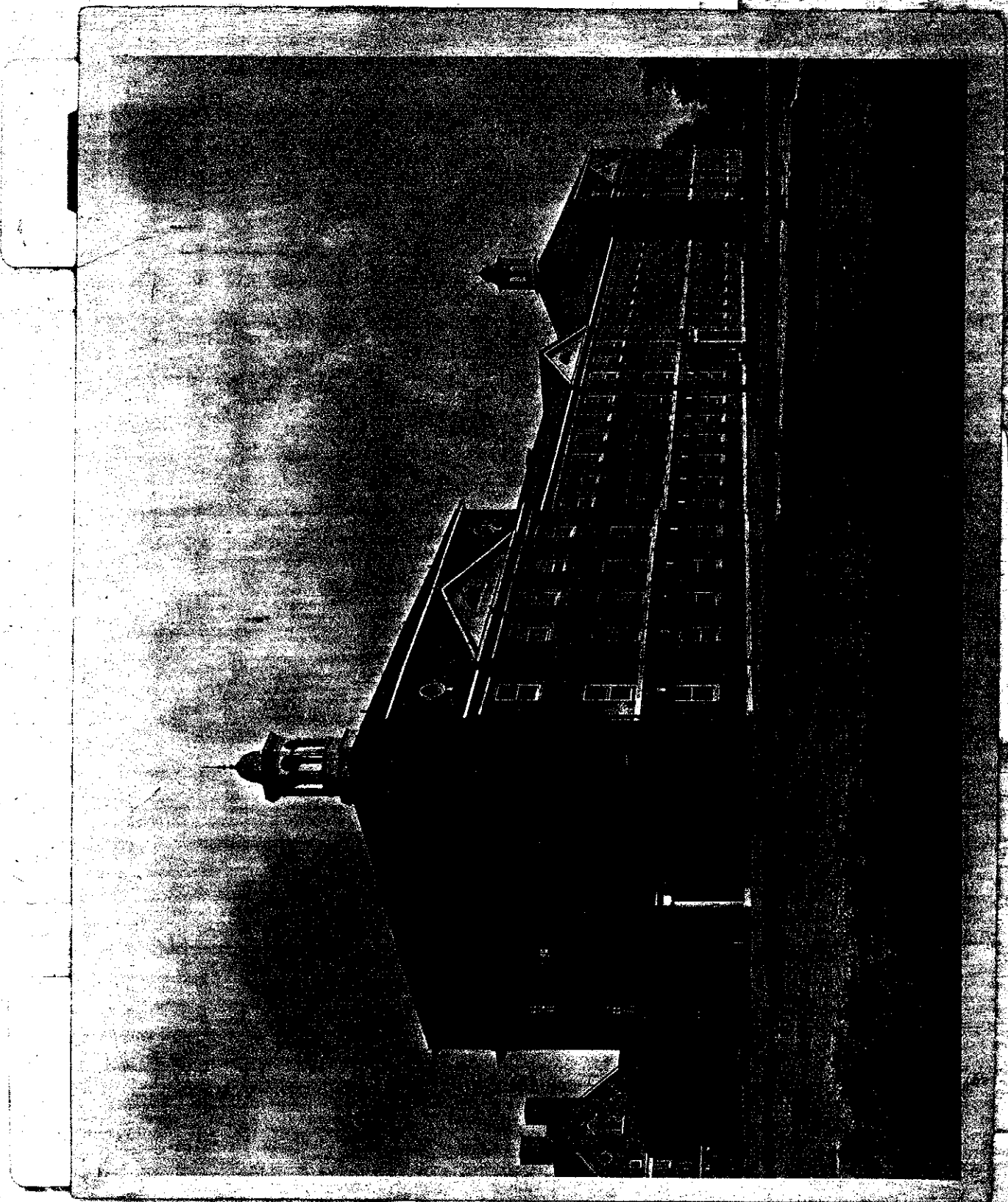
Rear view of units 7 and 8. May 16, 1930.



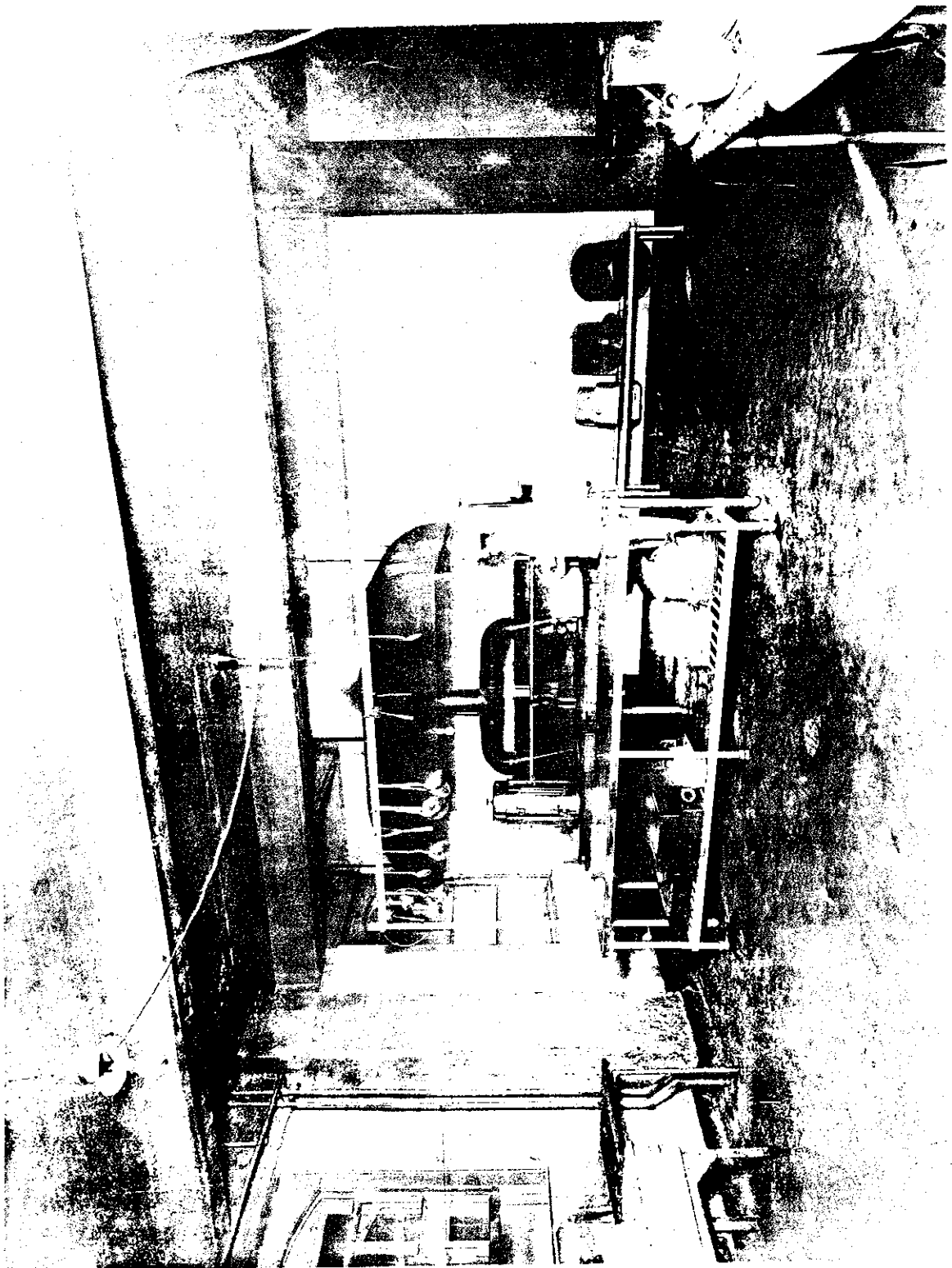
Rear view looking north. July 1, 1930.



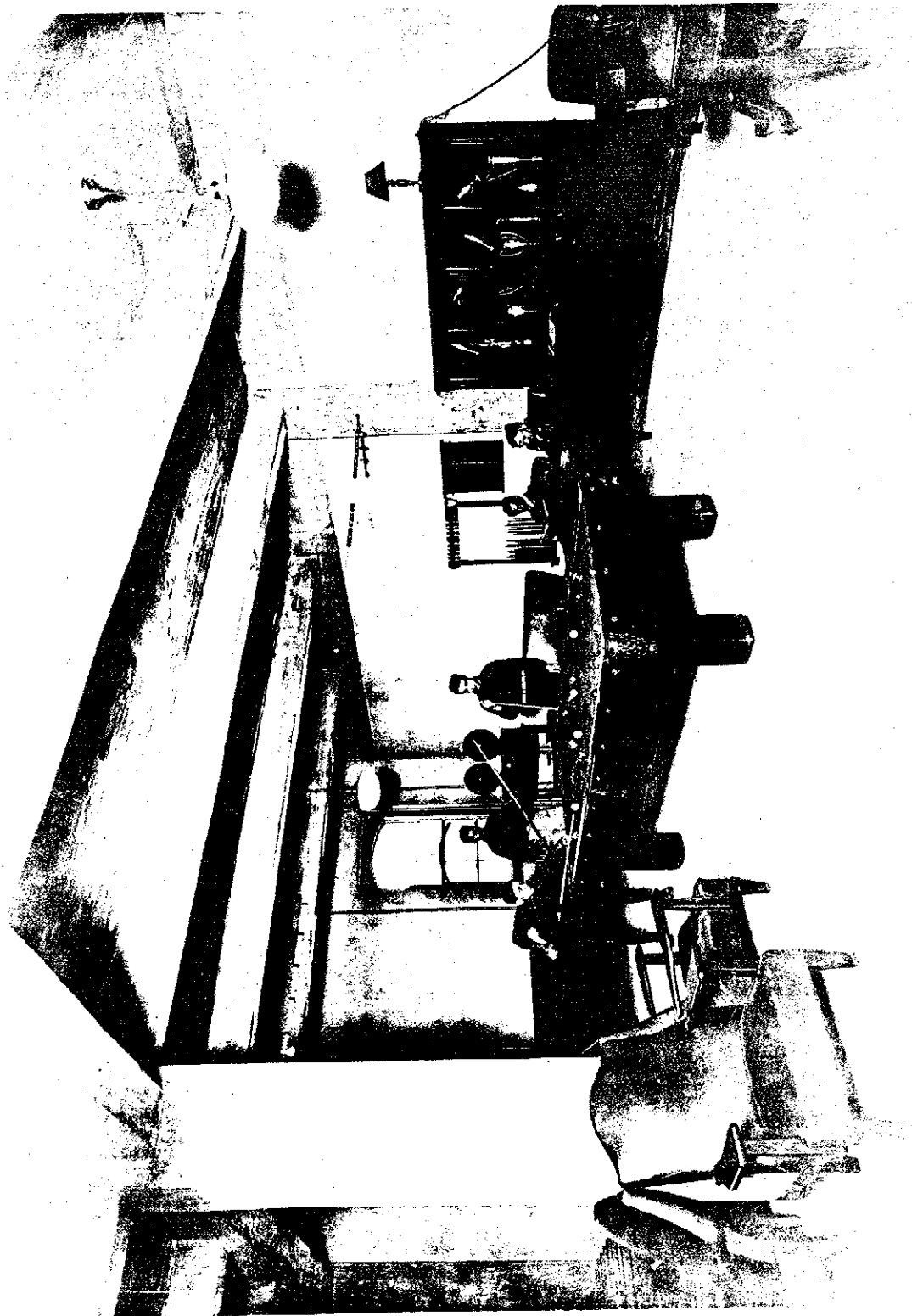
Front view looking south-east. July 1, 1930.



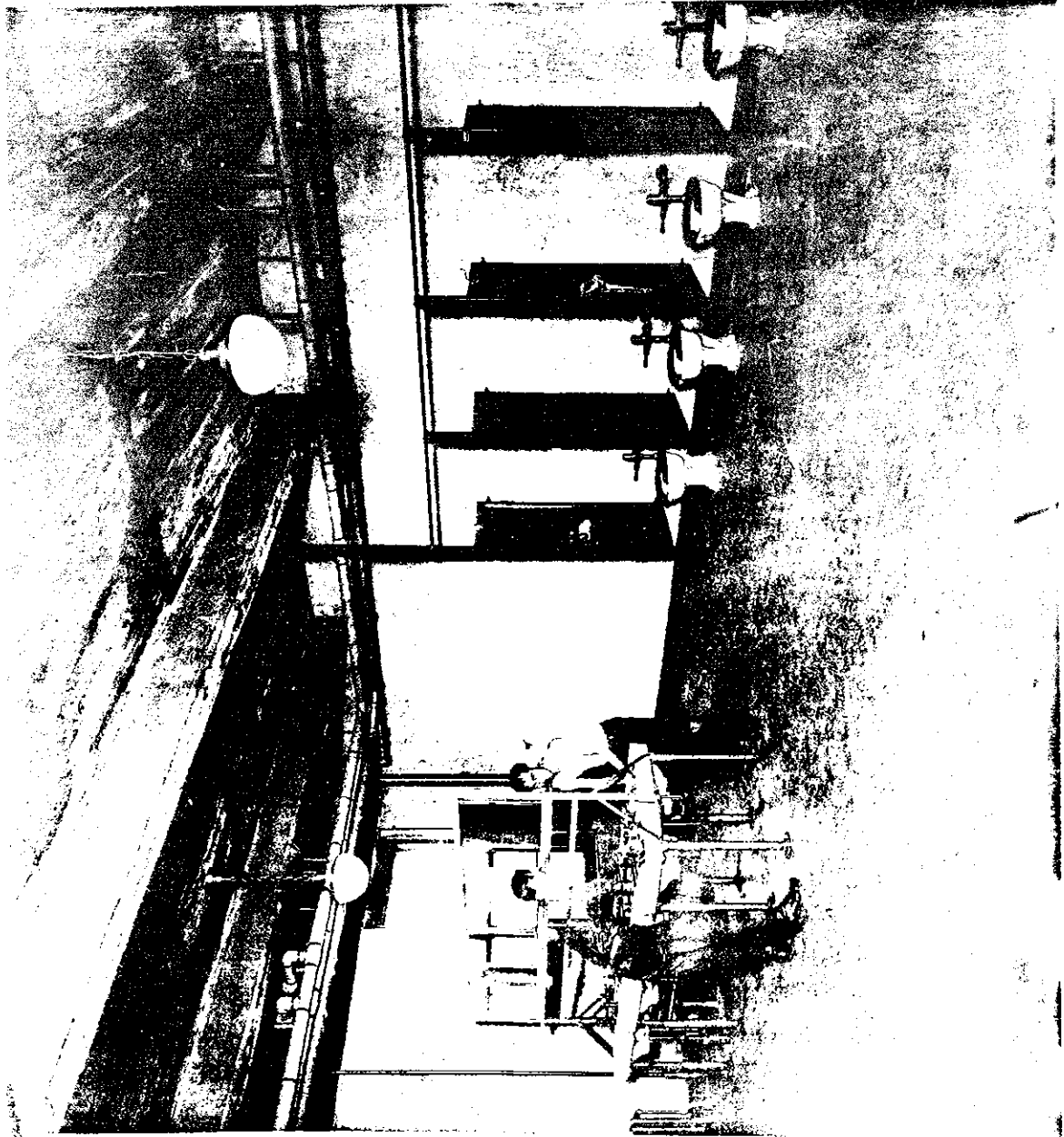
View looking north from unit 14 to unit 12.(east wing). July 1, 1930.



Interior of typical kitchens. July 1, 1930.



Interior of typical day rooms. July 1, 1930.



Interior of typical toilet rooms. July 1, 1930.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) at the request of the United States Coast Guard, Third Coast Guard District, Governors Island, New York, who funded the project. It is an addition to work accomplished during the summers of 1982 and 1983. This entailed an historic structures inventory, a National Historic Landmark District nomination and documentation of five properties which was completed in 1984. A three-volume report and inventory cards containing the results of the historic structures inventory were transmitted to the Library of Congress as field records under HABS No. NY-5715. The National Historic Landmark District nomination was submitted and acted upon favorably by the National Park System Advisory Board in October of 1984. This project is to document a select list of structures including the New York Arsenal.

Sally Kress Tompkins, Deputy Chief of HABS/HAER, was project manager. Jet Lowe, HAER staff photographer, completed the large format photography. Jay Silberman, Environmental Specialist, District Planning Office, Third Coast Guard District, Governors Island, served as manager and coordinator of the project for the U.S. Coast Guard. Katherine Grandine was project historian.